

Low and I

BY F. W. THOMAS

PICTURES
BY LOW



"COULD YOU DIRECT US TO PICCADILLY CIRCUS?"

LOW AND I

By
F. W. THOMAS

FEW newspaper combinations of writer and artist have been so successful as that of "Low and I," whose bright double turn appears in the London 'Star' every Monday. The book is illustrated by fifty-six of Mr. Low's drawings, and deals with such widely diverse Lights o' London as Rotten Row, the New Cut, Hampton Court, the Chiswick Open-air Baths, the Zoo, Smithfield Market, Sotheby's, Billingsgate, and Kew Gardens, with a trip to Southend by way of variety.

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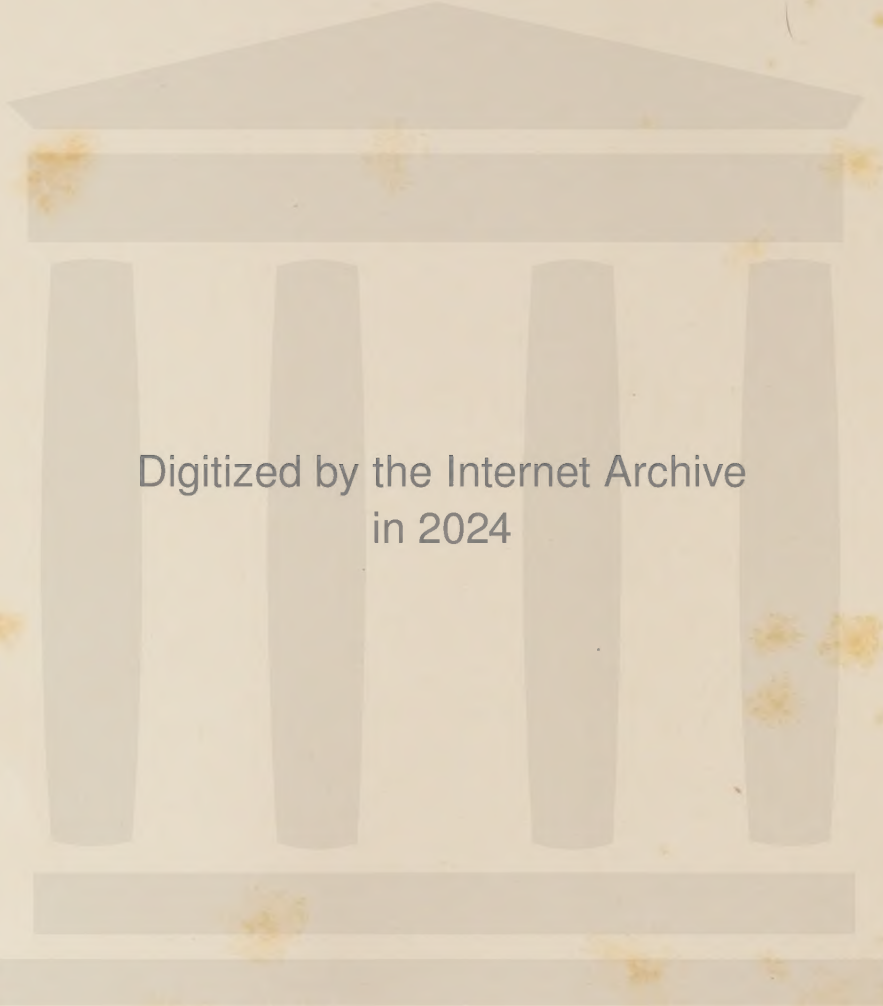
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MANUSCRIPT





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LOW AND I

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A COOKED TOUR IN
LONDON

BY
F. W. THOMAS

PICTURES BY

LOW

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LIST OF CONTENTS

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| I. | A TRIP TO THE TOWER | - | - | - | - | - | - | I |
| II. | UP THE MONUMENT | - | - | - | - | - | - | 6 |
| III. | BY THE BAYSWATER OCEAN | - | - | - | - | - | - | 10 |
| IV. | AMONG THE BABIES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS | - | - | - | - | - | - | 14 |
| V. | A RAMBLE ROUND THE ZOO | - | - | - | - | - | - | 18 |
| VI. | A DAY ON THE OCEAN WAVE | - | - | - | - | - | - | 22 |
| VII. | A RAMBLE IN THE ROW | - | - | - | - | - | - | 26 |
| VIII. | A DAY AT SOUTHEND | - | - | - | - | - | - | 30 |
| IX. | WITH THE BOYS AT BILLINGSGATE | - | - | - | - | - | - | 34 |
| X. | AT THE HORSE SHOW | - | - | - | - | - | - | 38 |
| XI. | WITH THE WATER NYMPHS AT CHISWICK | - | - | - | - | - | - | 42 |
| XII. | IN LONDON'S LATIN QUARTER | - | - | - | - | - | - | 46 |
| XIII. | AT THE PROMS- | - | - | - | - | - | - | 50 |
| XIV. | AN AUTUMN IDYLL | - | - | - | - | - | - | 54 |
| XV. | AMONG THE SMITHFIELD MARTYRS | - | - | - | - | - | - | 58 |
| XVI. | LOST IN LONDON | - | - | - | - | - | - | 62 |
| XVII. | WE GO A-WAITING | - | - | - | - | - | - | 66 |
| XVIII. | WE SEE THE OLD YEAR OUT | - | - | - | - | - | - | 70 |

NOTE

These articles and drawings are selected from a series appearing in the London "STAR," to whose proprietors we are indebted for permission to reproduce them here.

I
LOW

A TRIP TO THE TOWER

FOR one seeking thrills the Tower is sadly disappointing. In spite of the splendid material at their command, the wonderful "props" and scenery, they do not seem to get the screams of the tortured across the footlights, and there is not a convincing bloodstain in the whole building.

On the way from Mark Lane I treated Low to a short summary of the traditions of the place, in the hope of getting the correct atmosphere; but it was no use. His flesh never crept once.

"Now, this," I said, "is the very hub of England's history, the cradle of our country. Its stones are cemented with the blood of kings, its walls, that have so often echoed with the cries of the damned, are hallowed by the bones of prince and priest."

"Really!" said Low. "May we smoke inside?"

Ignoring the banal interruption, I proceeded to enlighten him.

"Here it was," I said, "that Essex and Surrey, Northumberland and Norfolk, were done to death."

"And who was playing for Surrey in those days?" he asked.

"You will also recall," I went on, "those noble lines of Gray:

Ye Towers of Julius, London's lasting shame,
With many a foul and midnight murder fed."

"Hi!" yelled a policeman. "You can't go down there. Take your tickets on the left."

So I gave it up. One cannot work up an interest under those conditions.

But I might have saved myself the trouble. There is no atmosphere at the Tower; not a single sob or shudder in the whole show. The authorized guide (price twopence) is a mercenary pamphlet that gives you but the dry bones of the place; and though I strained my imagination until it got thin in the middle, nothing came of it.

For instance, take the White Tower. In the olden days, I suppose, they banqueted here on roasted oxen washed down with sack; while the king's jester, in motley, cap and bells, asked the assembled company strange riddles of his own devising.

"My liege, I cry thee mercy, but tell me, dost know a parlous villain, hight Hammond?"

"Hammond?" quoth the king. "Tell me, fool, who is this Hammond? Expound!"

"Indeed, my liege," saith the jester, "'tis none other than Hammond Eggs."

Whereupon his majesty called for his chief torturer to do a little turn on the rack.

That was the sort of thing, methinks. But to-day the spirit of the place



has gone; the White Tower is merely a museum where wooden warriors stand stiff in tin trousers and breastplates; hefty chaps in iron shirts and corrugated pants, who must have gone to bed with the help of a tin-opener.

Round the walls in racks stand the weapons of these mediaeval warriors; pole-axes, very knobby at the business end, war hammers, maces like the railings in Hyde Park, and partisans that would split you to the weasand and probably

further. Terrible contraptions, some of them. One crack across the sconce, and you wouldn't get your memory back even if you advertised for it.

The trouble with the Tower is its Beefeaters. They do not enter into the spirit of the place at all. Give them the slightest encouragement and they will heave dates at you by the gallon, but further than that they will not go. Moreover, they are fat, well-nourished old warriors, who by their looks, still consume enormous quantities of tops-of-ribs and sirloin.

Take the Yeoman in the crypt, where in a glass-case the axe and block are shown. On the walls of that gaunt cell are inscriptions cut out by the prisoners who languished there, and the rough-hewn floor is as it was in Crookback's time. But it doesn't move one an inch. The walls are nicely dusted, the floor swept and garnished, and the cells where men once rotted to death are lit by powerful electric bulbs.

There isn't a cobweb, or a shadow, or a memory in the place.

For some moments we stood before that grim block of wood with the two gashly cracks in its top, and tried to summon up the scene; the helpless

prisoner, pale and blindfolded, the distant whirring of steel on stone, where the headsman put a nice edge on his axe, or stopped the wheel to run his finger along it. We tried to imagine him practising his stance, his approach and upward swing, his neat finish and quick follow through.

And just as the 'fluence was beginning to work, along came a plump Beefeater, rosy and smiling.

"That'd give you a nasty headache, wouldn't it?" he said. "Simon Lord Lovat was the last to go through it. Biff! and he never smiled again. A pretty little blade, but give me a Gillette."

After which he asked us who we thought would win the Cup, and went off whistling "Sally."

The Regalia was more interesting, and Low and I stood there quite a long time, looking at the crown and the Cullinan diamond, thinking



they were ours and buying houses and cars and lots of nice things with the proceeds.

The Cullinan is certainly a splendid stone, weighing 519 carats. I've never seen anything like it since the Christy Minstrels went out of business. The warder told us how many naughts it was worth, but I lost count, and Low's sketch-book wasn't wide enough to take them down. It was a lot of money, though. I could have done all sorts of things with it. . . . But that warder simply would not leave us, and every now and again he stopped to count that diamond and see if all the carats were still there.

Still poor, we left the Jewel House, and set out for the Bloody Tower, passing the site of the scaffold on the Green. It looked peaceful enough to-day, with a perambulator standing close by, and half a dozen sparrows flirting on the blood-soaked ground.



"But think," I said to Low, "think of that May morning when Anne Boleyn came here. These same trees were full of fresh young leaf, the sky was blue, with high white cloud ships racing across it; the birds were nesting and quarrelling in the ivy. Think of the frightened faces at all those windows——"

"That part wasn't built then, sir," said a warder.

"Then think of 'em at those other windows," I said. "Women who had seen and known her, men who had waited upon her. I hear the slow tolling of St. Peter's bell, I see the throng of soldiers, the white-robed priests, the fainting tire-women, the—the——"

"Tell me what they look like," said Low, "and I'll do a sketch."

"And these same ravens that are now—g'way, you brutes!—these same birds of evil——"

"They're only babies, sir," said the warder. "Somebody gave 'em to us during the war."

"Well, then, what about lunch?" I said, and we moved on.

But the Yeoman at the Bloody Tower was the best of the whole bright bunch.

"This, ladies and gentlemen, is the room where Raleigh was imprisoned and where he wrote his History of the World, a copy of which you see in that glass-case. Twelve years it took him to write it, and fifteen months it took the Office of Works to make the case. Here, also, the little Princes were murdered. And many's the row I've had with fathers of families because there are no relics. They lug their fourteen youngsters up those narrow stairs, at sixpence a head,

and want to know where the skeletons are, and why there's no blood or bones. It was in this room, too, that Judge Jeffreys drank himself to death. And if you ask me it's just as well he lived when he did, because he'd never have done it on the stuff you get to-day."

And so on. He lightened the gloom of his dreadful story with merry jokes and quaint conceits: and we who had come to shiver remained to smile.

Then an allusion to the thumbscrew and the stake reminded us of lunch. So having supped full of horrors, and being still an-hungered, we left the Bloody Tower and took a bus.

UP THE MONUMENT

LONDON is full of kindly folk, anxious to help the wondering stranger, and extend the glad hand of fellowship to the verdant country cousin.

To prove this you have only to stand in Trafalgar Square, chewing a straw and looking like market day in Peebles or Wigan ; and in less than five minutes some kind-hearted gentleman is sure to offer you a gold fountain-pen or an introduction to a night club.

Low and I were standing at the foot of the Monument, wondering whether it was quite safe, when one of this friendly fraternity sidled up to us, and began to tell us all about it.



Maybe our mouths were a trifle open, or perhaps my Giggleswick tie misled him ; but it was obvious that we had "joost coom oop" ; and it was his business to befriend us and set our feet in the straight and narrow path.

After bidding us heartily welcome to dear old London Town, he proceeded to inform us that the Monument was built by—by—Great Scot ! It was on the tip of his tongue a minute ago. Anyway, it was built by somebody or other, and was ever so many feet high.

"Put up because of the Great Fire," he added ; and then, dropping his voice to a confidential whisper, "but if you want a real, red-hot thing for the City and Suburban, straight from the stable——"

It was the chance of a lifetime, and dirt cheap at half a crown ; but we told the old gentleman to get him behind us.

"Before we left the dear old cottage with the roses round the door," I said, "we promised gaffer we wouldn't have nowt to do with sich goings on. Besides, the runners aren't out yet." Whereupon our friend called us a lot of harsh names, and made some slighting references to the shape of my face.

Not wishing to bandy words with a native of Billingsgate, we left him, and went round to the little front door to see if all he had told us was true.

We found the attendant at the turnstile most obliging. Yes, he said, that was the way up. Those stairs. It was also the way down. . . . No, unfortunately the lift was not working, and sliding down the banisters was strictly forbidden by the City Lands Committee. The structure was 202 feet high, built of Portland stone, and that sixpence we were trying to palm off on him was a stumer.



So we found him another one, blew him a kiss, and set out on our Alpine adventure.

About eleven steps up Low started singing "Excelsior," bidding me beware the pine tree's withered branch, likewise the awful avalanche ; but I begged him to desist.

"This place is nearly 300 years old," I pointed out, "and it won't stand a lot of that sort of thing. As it is, the authorities are a bit nervous about it.

That's why they've put up that notice outside warning people against banging doormats against it."

However, I needn't have worried. Before we had done another three laps the youth who bore midst snow and ice was obviously distressed, and complained of being short of wind.

"Never mind," I said. "There'll be plenty to spare at the top. Half a gale or more."

Drooping like a limp lily, I sat me down on the stairs and took out my watch. . . . Temperature 102, pulse like a ticking spider, respiration and perspiration something awful.

"You go on Low," I said. "Go up and tell me what it's like, and I'll wait here."

When my internal machinery had slowed down a little I started off once more ; and, having looped two more loops, found my companion without any visible means of support except the railings ; and bemoaning the fact that he had left his alpenstock and rucksack at home.

With bowed heads and aching backs we struggled bravely on, round and round, and up and up, until I could climb no more.

"I'm finished !" I gasped. "Give my love to everybody, and take this—this bad sixpence as a memento. Take it, and keep it in remembrance——"

"Oh, hang !" said Low. "I was counting the stairs, and just as I've got as far as two-sixty-something you butt in and make me forget."



"Then you'd better go down and start all over again," I said. "I'll wait here for you. I don't suppose they'll charge you for a second go."



Twice more we struggled round, and then found the road barred by a large lady sitting on the stairs with her bonnet on her knees and no breath worth speaking of.

She did not ask us to stay and rest our weary heads upon her breast. Not she! She just told us that her poor feet weren't equal to the strain, and she couldn't go another step, neither up nor down, so there! And did we know where she could get a bottle

of stout or something?

"Cheer up!" I said. "We're nearly there. I can see the hole at the top." And, clambering over the obstacle, we puffed and plugged away towards the summit.

Our legs were about as limp as spaghetti, our eyes stood out like door-knobs; but still we blundered on . . . round and round . . . onwards and upwards . . . until——

"Brandy!" sobbed Low, and fell through the door at the top.

"Sorry, sir," said the attendant. "We haven't got a spirit licence; but there's a bottle of water I keep for the ladies who faint."

It was a disappointing business in other respects as well. After all that trouble, I had fully expected a nice soda fountain at the top, with, maybe, a couple of chamois, and snow all the year round. Instead, all we got was a wind that blew the buttons off our clothes, and an expansive view, chiefly chimney-pots and smoke.

As we fought to regain our lost breath, the attendant pointed out the objects of interest, which, he said, we could have seen had it been a clear day. The Berkshire hills, for instance, and the Crystal Palace. But when I want to have another look at that I shall take the elevated electric. It isn't nearly so elevated.

The downward path, as usual, was quite easy, but I think the place could be improved by allowing visitors to slip the slip on doormats, as we used to do at Earl's Court. The present somewhat old-fashioned method of descending is very hard on the trousers.

At the bottom the attendant informed us that there were 311 steps in all, and then sold us a little guide book which told us on page 8 that there were 345.

As Low had made it 310 we felt that we had been swindled, and asked for our money back, but the City Corporation are hard-hearted people.



Personally, I think the total is nearer 500 ; but I was never very good at figures, and maybe I counted some of them twice. One of these days, when the lift is working, I must go back and make sure.



BY THE BAYSWATER OCEAN

AT the foot of Mount Olympus, says Prester John, there flows a stream whose waters, taken three times a day after meals, cure all the infirmities of age, and endow the drinker with perpetual youth.

Personally I have my doubts ; for Prester John is dead these many years, which is not much of a testimonial to his elixir of life. . . . Maybe he forgot to shake the bottle.

But there is no need to worry about that ; for we have a magic pool here at home, whose waters are more potent than the Olympian spring : a faery pool where age can wash its years away and greybeards grow young again.

It lies between Bayswater Road and Kensington, and on the maps they call it the Round Pond ; probably because it isn't.

Here, on a fine day, come the old gentlemen with their toy boats, seeking to recapture their long-lost youth ; nimble nonogenarians, with yachts, and ketches, and schooner-rigged barquentines ; ancient mariners who ought to know better ; and old masters of craft who have long outlived their Board of Trade tickets.

Behind them, a melancholy train, come their nephews and grandsons, weeping because the old men have borrowed their toys, and will not let them have a go.

Sometimes the boats are so big and fine that the uncles bag the family perambulators to wheel them down to the pond ; and that, I am told, is why you see so many bandy-legged babies in Broad Walk. They were put on their feet too soon, so that granddad might have the push-chair to play with.

There was a brisk north-easter blowing when Low and I reached the Kensington Coast, and the white-winged craft were scudding before it with every stitch they could carry.

There were smart raters, a yard long, with a displacement of at least a pint and a half ; brown-sailed barges, three masted-clippers, trim little yawls leaning from the wind, and one clinking ocean greyhound, twin-screwed with clockwork in the engine-room. And round the shore ran the nippy old gentlemen with their bamboo canes and curtain poles, to meet their boats and shove them off for another trip to the Land of Lost Youth.

But we, poor fools, had no boat, and looked very foolish in consequence, until Low got busy with a matchbox ; and in less than five minutes the good ship " Bryant and May " was fitted out, commissioned, and launched on her maiden voyage across the stormy seas to Bayswater.

For the first ten yards she had a pretty smooth passage, but I think the glass

must have been falling, for soon she began to make heavy weather, and halfway across a duck tried to eat her, so that her mast fell by the board, and she lay, forlorn and derelict, in mid-ocean.

Our next venture was a little more successful. She was a single-master, built out of an old envelope, with a bit of a love-letter for a sail ; and she went like a bird. It was as much as we could do to get round to the opposite shore in time to meet her.

Just as she was making harbour safely, a clinker-built cutter barged right across her bows, and all but drove her under. It was a tense moment, but we met it like Britons. The blood of the old sea rovers was well up, and we dashed round to give the clumsy skipper a piece of our minds.

“Hi, you gardener!” I yelled. “Luff, you lubber! Luff and let her come round. Aren’t the High Seas big enough for you? Shove her over, and shiver your timbers!”

But the old gentleman also knew the rules of the game.

“Belay there!” he shouted. “Port your jib abaft the sponson, and be hanged to you for a boatload of washerwomen. Up fores’l, you fatheads, and sheer off to starboard. Get your beastly manure barge out of the fairway, or I’ll sink her with all hands.”

He did too. Stuck his nose right in our envelope amidships, so that she filled and went down by the head, with the old Red Ensign fluttering gamely at the peak.

“ Why can’t you look where you’re going ? ” yelled Low, and “ Why don’t you go where you’re looking ? ” bellowed I. “ Barging about on the raging main with neither lights nor look-out. Back to your bath-chair, and leave seafaring to your grand-children.”

“What d’you mean?” roared the old gent. “Look at my paintwork! Look at my davits carried away! Look at my jibboom, all smashed to blazes! You shall hear more about this, sir. I’ll report ye to the Board of Trade, and ye’ll lose your ticket. A couple of lazy, loafing longshoremen——” But there we gave him best and withdrew. This deep-sea lingo is not good for the infant mind.



GRANPA HELPS
LITTLE JOHNNY.

Of all the dandy craft that sail the Round Pond by far the most romantic are the flat bits of wood, with matches for jury masts, that you drag round the coast at the end of a string.

See that barelegged boy with a piece of an egg box in tow? You may call this the Round Pond if you like, but he knows better. This is the South Seas or the Spanish Main, according to taste.



For one thing, it isn't round at all. There are snug little coves and harbours, coral reefs and palm beaches, and strange countries where the natives are not always friendly. There are uncharted rocks and desert islands, and this tight little craft, the "Golden Hind," and his first command, is going to find out all about them.

So give way there, my hearties, and take a reef in your binnacle. Port your hellum a trifle, and

We'll shoot the wild banana
And the Ipecachuana,
When we reach the Roaring Forties,
Near the Islands of the Blest.

Suddenly, "Hi, silly! Where you comin' to?" and the boy drops to earth with a thud. For his boat has run into a tiddler-fishing village, and scared all the game for miles.

It is an unwritten law of the Pond that all vessels shall give the tiddler-fishers a wide berth. For, next to the shipping, that is the most important industry in the Gardens.

You ask young Alf Bivvings. He is senior partner in a seine net made of a bit of old sacking, and one of the best fishermen on the banks. That is his morning's work in the tomato tin: seventeen in all, including three "red-froats," the gems of the catch. In the local currency a red-froat is worth three ordinary tiddlers, as, except at certain seasons, these fish are very scarce.

Beside the seining party are several other fishermen working with little nets and jam jars, and very nippy they are, too. You need a sharp eye and a quick wrist to get your net round a tiddler and haul him safely ashore.

I know, because I tried with Arfer Mobbs's outfit, while the rest of the professionals stood round and laughed consumedly.

"There's one, guv'nor! Look! A big 'un, too. Steady on! Don't splash, else you'll frighten him away. . . . Go on! That's it. Now then, quick! *Quick!* . . . 'Ere, give it ter me!"

Like lightning, only more rapidly, I dabbed the net over the very spot where the fish was, but the little beggar wouldn't stop there; and all I got was a handful of mud, a boot full of water, and some rude remarks from Low.

Fortunately a diversion arose in the offing, where a young and aristocratic Kensingtonian suddenly gave vent to a series of enormous shrieks and stampings of his feet.

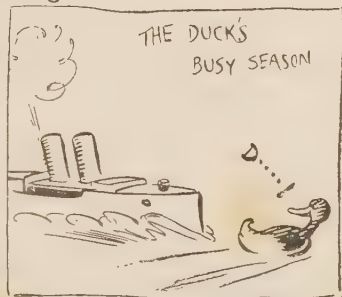
In vain did his Nanna threaten and cajole. He just stood there, storming and raging like a little typhoon, and would not budge. It appeared that his boat—a one-and-eleven-three schooner—had started out to cross the Pond, but halfway over the wind had dropped.

So there she was, becalmed, "As idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean"; and it wanted ten minutes to four bells, otherwise tea-time.

"Never mind, Master Cuthbert," said Nanna. "You must come home now. The park-keeper will get it for us to-morrow. Come along!"

But Cuthbert thought not. He stuck his heels into the gravel and hung on to a tuppenny chair like grim death. He wanted his boat, *his boat*, HIS BOAT! and until he got it he intended to stay there and yell blue murder.

So Nanna, who wanted her tea, gave him one good one, just where his little pants were tightest, tucked him under her arm, and set off. And the last we saw of Master Cuthbert was a pair of wildly waving feet, and a voice that shouted, "SHAN'T! SHAN'T! SHAN'T!" right across the Park.



AMONG THE BABIES IN KENSINGTON GARDENS

FOR the protection of the mere adult there should be a special bye-law posted at the entrance to Kensington Gardens, laying it down that "Grown-ups are not admitted unless accompanied by the right time."

The man who isn't airing a baby or a **borzoi**, and doesn't know the right time, has no business there at all ; and the habitués of the place do not scruple to let him know it.

Halfway along Broad Walk my imagination began to ache with the effort of finding excuses for my absent watch ; and I don't think a single one of them went down. For the young aristocrat of Kensington has a steady and relentless eye, before which the amateur fibber feels himself going pink all over.

First there was Michael, six, serene, and self-possessed, mounted on a thoroughbred scooter. And please could we tell him the right time ?

"Getting on for eleven," I hazarded ; but that was not good enough. You see, Michael had an appointment with his music-teacher at 11.30, and Miss Quaver got so crotchety if he was not punctual.

"Thorry to trouble you," he said, and swished off at well over the speed-limit, to find someone more useful.

Then there was a rosy-cheeked nursemaid, with a complete set of twins in a pram, whose morning bottle was due at 11.15. Plenty of time, we told her ; but as neither of us consulted our wrists or waistcoats, she thanked us politely, and asked a policeman. And as it took him nearly twenty minutes to tell her, I expect the **twins** died of malnutrition.

A flushed and happy youngster came next. He had been sailing buccaneer matchboxes on the Round Pond, and was mired to the knees. His Nanna was sitting under the mulberry-tree over there, but he had no wish to go to her before his time.

At our vague answer he gave himself the benefit of the doubt, and went back to the Pond again, to be a pirate king for another ten minutes.

Only the right time will satisfy these young people. Not the approximate hour, mind ! Not "a little after," or "getting on for," but the real Greenwich Mean, with special attention to the odd minutes. And if you haven't got it, you had better cross the Gardens by another route. They don't want you.

Broad Walk is the babies' Rotten Row. Here on a fine morning comes the

best blood in Bayswater to take the air ; the infantile liver brigade, mounted on fiery bicycle horses and Rolls-Royce scooters, or lying back in their luxurious prams, gurgling at the sky. And since the place is cosmopolitan, here, too, comes little Milly from Notting Dale, pushing her young and sticky brother in a sugar-box.

Like Michael, Milly also has an appointment. She must be home at noon to take her father's dinner to the cab rank, and please can you tell her the right time ?

But Milly has not been very well brought up; and when I fumble at my empty pocket and make a rough guess at it, she grins knowingly, and asks me if I have lost the ticket.

Except as a connecting link between Bayswater and Kensington, Broad Walk belongs to the babies and the dogs. There you will see the cosiest prams, the prettiest nurses, and the plumpest kiddies in West London, with stately dowagers exercising their Poms and Pokes, and red-nosed half-pay colonels taking the terrier for a blow before lunch. If you are lucky you may see John or James in mufti,



THE RABBIT FANCIER.

upright and very dignified, giving the Aberdeens and Airedales their morning stroll. A wonderful sight!

Occasionally the solemnity of the business breaks down; as when Majah Chutnee's wire-haired fell foul of Colonel Bogey's "Irishman." Then, for five happy minutes, the air was full of fur and canine curses, while the Colonel banged the railings with his stick and bellowed, "Yah, sir! Come yah at once!" and my lady clucked like a hen to collect her waddling escort of pugs.

But the babies are the thing. Bonny blue-eyed, blue-blooded youngsters they are, rosy and complacent. But not nearly so rosy as Low when one young person in pink, on the sunny side of two, stood up in her pram, and with outstretched arms greeted him as "Dad-dad-dad-dad!" to the intense enjoyment of the Nanna in charge. It was a handsome child, and there was really no need for the artist's emphatic denial.



Now and again, in spite of their careful upbringing, these young people kick over the traces and go Berserk like ordinary human babies. For instance, hearing screams from the neighbourhood of the Pond, Low and I went there at the double, trying to recall the rules for the resuscitation of the apparently drowned. But it was only young Bernard Montessor Blenkinsop having a tantrum.

Tantrums, you should know, are performed in the following manner: First of all, you sling your teddy bear overboard, following it up with your bottle. Then you yell blue murder, and try to strangle yourself in your safety-strap.

At this stage your Nanna will probably administer one small slap on the naked arm, and tell you not to be naughty. Here it is your business to go stiff all over, to stretch your legs and arms, and hold your breath until your eyes stick out and threaten to go pop. If that doesn't get you your own way, nothing will.

It was a muggy morning when we visited the Gardens, and maybe this had affected the infant liver; for we saw no less than four splendid tantrums, and in each case the cure was the same. Without a word, the well-trained nurse whipped the rigid rebel from the pram, pulled up its clothes, and sat it quickly on something cold. . . . There was a gasp, a gurgle, and the youngster took in air once more, to let it out in one almighty yell.

Young Bernard, who was about fifteen months and just over two stone, put up a fine fight. Three short-arm jabs he landed in his nurse's face, and his

foot-work was beautiful ; but Nanna had the science, and soon reduced him to a limp and penitent bundle of sobs.

A little further along the Walk it was my turn to be recognized. A small boy in blue near whom I was sitting began to inspect me carefully. His wide and trusting eye searched me slowly from head to foot. "Surely," he mused, "I have seen something like that before. . . . It looks familiar. I believe we've got one at home."

Then it suddenly dawned upon him. He pointed an accusing finger at me, and, calling his nurse's attention, said : "Man ! Man ! Man !"

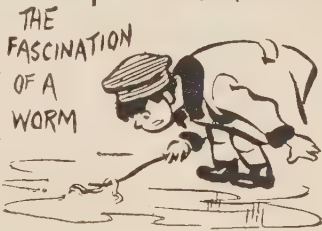
"Yes, darling," said the nurse. "That's a man." And to me, by way of apology, "Isn't it funny how they notice things ?" As I pointed out to Low, some of these children are quite bright at times.

But the five-year-olds are the best fun. See them scampering over the grass, light as wind-blown leaves, skipping and jumping and laughing, their pink legs flying, their wild manes streaming in the breeze ; and when their hoops get the bit between their teeth and bolt, you must look out for your shins.

Down by the Peter Pan statue we came upon another dark and dreadful tragedy, with bloodcurdling shrieks to match. A two-year-old had strayed from his leading strings into the little enclosure where Peter plays his pipe, and he wanted one of those bronze rabbits at the base of the statue.

He wanted it badly, and, what is more, he meant having it. So he tugged and pulled and hauled at the sculptured bunny, bellowing until he was purple behind the ears.

It took two nurses, a park-keeper, a policeman, and a large slap to convince him that the thing was a fixture. Whereat his language became the ripest baby Billingsgate, and in the end he was carried away in something that, to my unskilled eye, looked rather like a new thing in fits.



A RAMBLE ROUND THE ZOO

THERE are still one or two specimens which the Zoo needs to make it complete. Dragons, for instance, and unicorns; while I understand that the Mock-Turtle, the only one in captivity, came to a bad end last Lord Mayor's Show Day.

But when Low grabbed the guide book and started to run, I thought he had found an old friend—one of the Australian Eleven, perhaps.

"Number 73," was all he would say, and until we got there he had eyes for nothing else. Elephants left him cold, lions and tigers he scorned, and even the Tasmanian Devil failed to move him. But when we sighted the kangaroo sheds! . . .

It was a most affecting meeting. The two compatriots recognized each other at once, and were soon swapping lies about Gippsland, the backblocks, the Wagga-Wagga River, and last year's test matches.

"Gave the old country beans that time, didn't we, Wallaby?" said the artist; and his friend the kangaroo went round his cage by leaps and bounds at the thought of it. He'd make a splendid short slip, that chap.

When at last I got Low away, we went to the Western Aviary, where a few friends of my own are incarcerated. But the Mynahs were on strike. The chap in the corner, who is always so anxious to know how I am, didn't seem a bit interested to-day.

So we went across to the Small Birds' House, where live some of Dame Nature's worst and best experiments. In the beginning, when the old lady was roughing things out, she made quite a lot of bad breaks, and the Toucan is one of them. Why that poor chap should be burdened with a bill like a seaside landlady nobody knows. And the Sulphur Breasted variety is even worse. Both in colour and design he reminds one of a Futurist nightmare framed upside down.

Low objected to it strongly. "The proportions are all wrong," he said, "and the head is badly out of drawing. In fact, the whole thing ought to be rubbed out and done afresh. Take that Yellow-Winged Sugar Bird, for instance. If I'd been designing that chap, I should have given him a much shorter beak, lengthened his legs a little, and put a dash of crimson on his chest. You see what I mean." And he took out his india-rubber and approached the cage.

But the keeper was looking; so we gave up our attempt to improve on Nature, and went to see the Parrots.

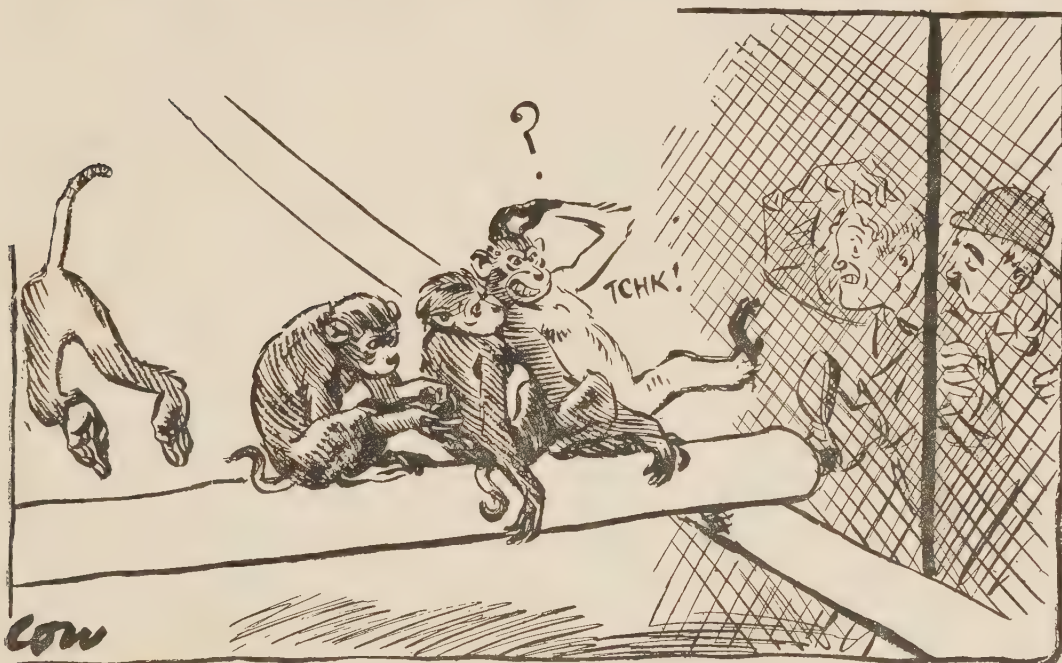
By the way, there is one chap in the Small Birds' House you mustn't miss.

They call him the "Plicated Hornbill," but he's the finest imitation of Grock I've ever seen. Makes a noise like him, too.

Parrots are a mad, hysterical lot of people. They seem to spend all their time shrieking and chewing wood, or hanging head downwards to see how the world looks wrong way up. But really one can't wonder at it.

On a busy day, the keeper told me, about 10,000 people go through the Parrot House; and every one of them says, "Hallo, Polly! What's the time?"

Wouldn't that make you mad? Think of it on a fine August Bank Holiday



THOMAS GIVES THE COUNTERSIGN

—"Hallo, Polly! What's the time?" from 9 a.m. till sunset. No wonder they scream, and bite their toes, and try to hang themselves.

As an antidote for pessimism there is nothing better than an hour in the Monkey House. When you see your ancestors biting each other's tails and scratching themselves, you must admit that we haven't done so badly. The family has certainly got on. It has improved. . . .

Of course, clothes make a good deal of difference, especially trousers; but our table manners and general behaviour are much better than they were. And when I saw sixteen of my forbears sitting in a bunch, all busy, all singing "A-hunting we will go," I felt quite proud of myself. But the notice bidding us "Beware of Pickpockets" was rather a blow.

On our way to the lions we discovered the wisest animal in the world, the

Marabou Stork. The things that bird knows you'd never believe. And yet he is the most miserable and dejected looking creature in the Gardens.



All day long he stands in his cage, thinking, thinking, with the bowed head and bent back of a bibliophile, his hands clasped beneath his coat-tails, and a book sticking out of his pocket. And he looks as gloomy as any dean. He has eaten of the Tree of Knowledge, and it has given him a tummy ache. But to make him complete I think the authorities ought to buy him a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles.

For the greater part of the day the Lion House is a dull show. Bored almost to tears, the big cats lie and blink at the sunlight, or stretch themselves to sleep and dream of the jungle; and except when a fat man comes in they take no notice of their visitors.

But as the clock draws near to feeding time they get more animated, pace their dens anxiously, and peer through the bars to catch the waiter's eye.

"What's on to-day, George? Cab-horse again? Why, we had that yesterday. Couldn't you get us something young and tender for a change? What about that chap with the sketch-book? He looks good!"

Four o'clock is the Lions' great hour. Then the human beings crowd along the rails, and hold up their little children to see the great beasts mauling a row of red ribs that once belonged to a poor old horse.

It is a messy business, and somehow the King of Beasts does not look at all dignified at his dinner.

The Tortoise House is a good corrective, however. When we got there the cabbage had just been served out, and one old chap, about five yards from the dinner table, was hurrying across as fast as he could. He'll probably be there by Friday. This particular shellback, I learned, is over 200 years old, and remembers the Battle of Waterloo quite well, though he seldom talks about it.



I think something ought to be done about the Mappin Terraces : some barbed wire or a strong fence. Those baby goats and ibexes and things *will* stand right on the very edge and look over ; and I'm sure there'll be a nasty accident one of these days.

The Canadian Skunk might also be improved on. . . . A little Jockey Club, perhaps, or a dash of patchouli. I didn't like him at all, and it beats me how he can put up with himself.

After a short visit to No. 91, the Gazelle Sheds, we followed the directions in the guide book, and so came to " No. 97, The Exit," on the other side of which we captured an interesting specimen of the Common Taxicab. And so home.

A DAY ON THE OCEAN WAVE

WE are an island people ; heirs to the heritage of Raleigh and Drake, to say nothing of Longshoreman Billy of Portsmouth Town. The salt of the sea is in our blood ; our march is o'er the mountain wave, and our home is on the deep.

In witness of which you should have seen Low, with his cap at the correct Beatty angle, hoisting his slacks as he tripped up the gangplank of the s.s. "Kingwood."

That tight little craft lay straining at her moorings by Westminster Bridge, impatient to start on her quest into the uncharted waters that lie between the Tate Gallery and Brentford Gas Works.

Already the captain was at the wheel, twiddling the spokes to see that it worked all right ; and, wishing to do the thing properly, I saluted him in right Navy fashion, with a "Yo, heave ho !" and a cheery "Come aboard, sir !"

"Looks a bit dirty to loo'ard, skipper," I said. "She'll be shipping 'em green in Chelsea Reach if the wind backs a bit."

But the skipper he blew a whiff from his pipe, and "Plenty of room in front," he said. "Deck chairs sixpence extra. Mind stepping on, please."

It was hardly what I had expected, and I began to wonder if the man knew his job. A skipper who said "in front" when he meant "forrard" hadn't learnt the first thing about his profession.

"I don't like it a bit," I told Low ; and filled with misgivings, we both rolled aft to see where they kept the life-saving apparatus.

We found it in the saloon, bottled and on draught, but we were told by the Hebe in charge that, owing to the licensing laws, she was forbidden to save our lives until the boat was under way.

As Big Ben struck three bells the first mate undid the string that tied us to the pier, the engines began to chunk, and with a last, long, lingering look at the white cliffs of Westminster and the L.C.C. trams we slid into mid-stream.

There was a bit of a sea on, and, hardly had we shot the bridge, before one or two strong men went below to have their lives saved ; and within a few minutes several corks were bobbing in our wake.

West of Lambeth Bridge (Lat. 51° 31' N. Long. 0° 6' W.) the "Kingwood" ran past a heavy swell. He was sitting in a motor-boat playing with the works. We gave him a hail and left him wallowing in our wash, at which he said several things which were fortunately carried away on the breeze.

Like a greyhound our gallant craft leapt at the waves, the skipper, grim and

determined, grasping his wheel and peering ahead into the unknown.

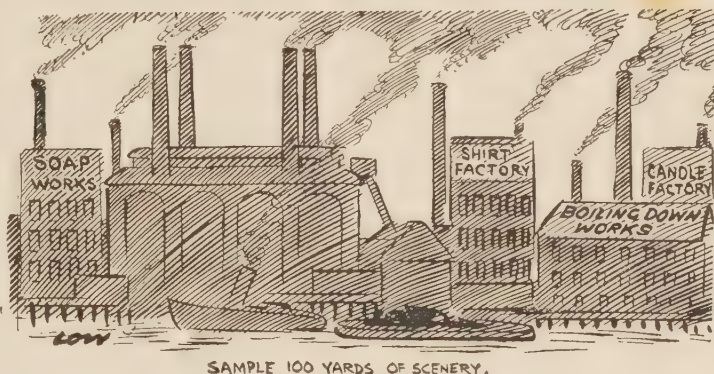
All round us was a wild waste of waters, with coal barges and tugs churning it into foam; while on the horizon the L.C.C. trams rattled and clanged along the Albert Embankment.

But what is this? A deck-hand, with an anxious look on his face and a patch in his trousers, is running aft to the captain. Fiercely they whisper together, the tough old salt still keeping his eyes glued to our course.

"What do you make of it, Low?" I asked. "D'you think she's down by the head? Have we shivered our timbers, or is the cargo shifting?"

"That's it," said the artist. "I saw a man shifting some of it down in the saloon just now."

The earnest muffled conversation went on, and our skipper looked more grim and determined than ever. His eyes scanned the horizon. He



gritted his teeth. He leaned forward and knocked his pipe out.

"I'm afraid we're in for it," I said. "It'll be man and arm watertight doors in a minute, to say nothing of *sauf qui peut* and women and children first. But whatever happens, old friend, do try and keep your sketch-book dry, and I'll do the same with my story."

As I spoke the sailor touched his hat to the skipper, and with a brave "Ay, ay, sir!" turned to go. But the skipper called him back.

"And look here, George," he said. "Tell her to put two lumps of sugar in it this time. That last cup I had wasn't nice."

Abaft the sponson or thereabouts I saw a young sailor standing with a rope in his hand; and as we neared Battersea Bridge he suddenly began to haul on the thing, and to my utter astonishment our chimney pot broke asunder in the middle and the top half came unstuck.

With wonderful presence of mind I dashed across to him and bade him desist.

"D'you see what you've done?" I said. "You've been and gone and bent our stove-pipe. You mustn't do that. The captain will be so angry when he knows."

Explanations followed, from which I gathered that this young salt was the admiral in charge of the chimney pot, whose business it was to lower the stack as we approached a bridge, so that we could get underneath.

"And what would happen," I asked, "if you forgot, or were looking the other way, when a bridge came by?"



"I dunno," said the gallant lad, "but I reckon we'd carry the bridge away, and then I should get into a row for scratching the paint on our funnel. . . . Ay, it's a hard, rough life," he said. "Between Westminster and Richmond there's dozens of bridges—far too many of 'em—and I have to know just where every one of 'em is."

Five years he had been at it, he told me, in every sort of weather, and never bent a bridge yet. . . . That shows you the stuff these men are made of.

At four bells in the dog watch we made Putney, and so came into the boat race reach. I know now why they call them dog watches, because we passed one shortly afterwards, going in the opposite direction.

It was blowing about a quarter of a gale as we steamed past the gasworks, and our brave boat began to stagger beneath the blows of the great green combers.

"Rolls a bit, doesn't she?" I asked the skipper. "Do you think there's any water in the hold?"

"Shouldn't wonder," he said with a grim smile. "But you can get tea and ginger ale at the bar."

Just then a great cry went up from the look-out.

"Mortlake Brewery on the starboard bow," he shouted. "Luff a pint." So we went below and luffed a pint each as ordered.

Once past Hammer-

smith the weather died down a little and the sea ran calmer; but our dangers were not yet over; for as we passed beneath Barnes Bridge, a rude little boy dropped a banana skin on my hat, while another tried to throw a brick down our chimney.

Nothing else of importance happened on the trip, and sharp at 4.30 the pier at Kew loomed up in the offing, and we were at our journey's end. . . . The natives were quite friendly, and, as earnest of their good intentions, invited us to take tea with them, at a bob a nob, with shrimps.

The rate of exchange in these parts is twenty shillings to the Bradbury, but you can easily get less if you are not watching.



A RAMBLE IN THE ROW

A HUNDRED yards inside the park the roar of London's traffic drops to a low, soothing murmur, like distant breakers. You may sit there, given good weather and the necessary tuppence, and watch the buses beyond the railings gliding silently as phantoms, and hear in the whispering of the trees the last spent wave nosing the pebbles on the beach.

We sat there, Low and I, peacefully blowing incense at the midges ; and when I closed my eyes I saw my own blue bay fringed with white, and a wheeling gull against the azure overhead. Unfortunately that foolish bird would keep saying "Honk-honk," just like a motor-bus ; which rather spoilt the picture.

"Now the trouble with Lloyd George," said Low ; and I came back to earth with a bump.

"I wish you wouldn't keep dragging him in," I protested. "I was in the middle of a lovely dream ; and now I must start all over again."

With a tremendous effort I managed to get back to the beach, and was just going down to bathe when another voice—a nasty, thick, three-cornered voice—broke into my reverie and smashed the whole show to bits.

"Men and feller-workers," it said, "'ow long, 'ow long will you be content to remain 'ewers of wood and drawers of water ? 'Ow long will you go on writhing under the 'eel of the idle rich ? "

It came from one in a red tie who stood on a soap box, shaking a threatening fist and quoting Karl Marx at the stately homes of Park Lane, and beseeching us, Low and me, to arise in our might and squelch the oppressor.

"Very well," said Low. "Let's !" So we arose in our might, and wandered away towards the Row, where the idle rich and the oppressor were airing their livers beneath the trees.

Leaning on the railings by the hydrangeas it was quite easy to forget the sorrows of our brother on the soap box.

Here was my Lord Fitz-Battleaxe, cantering along on his plump hack, with a yard of daylight 'twixt seat and saddle. Here was the smart young buck, riding like a centaur, with a merry roving eye for the ladies on the footpath.

And how shall one write of the Honorable Ursula ? Taut and trim, beautiful as a May morning, sitting her chestnut like an amazon, she broke my heart into ten thousand little pieces. And when she pulled up to tuck in a stray brown curl, I saw that her cheeks were fresh roses and cream, her eyes like to the fish-pools of Heshbon.

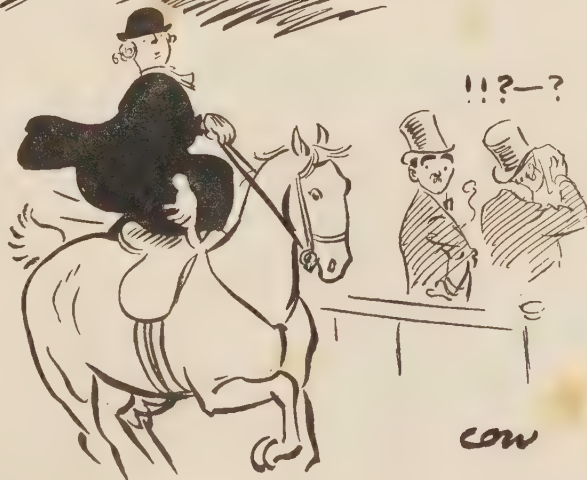
Not so her aunt, the Lady Tabitha. She sat her fat roan with all the superb grace of a sack of potatoes, trying hard to look as if she enjoyed it ; while old Sir Cuthbert ambled beside her, blowing out his purple cheeks, and holding his hat on when his mount would let him.

From far up the Row came the dull rumble of pounding hoofs, and, like a horde of Red Indians, the light brigade swept down ; half-a-dozen girls, all astride, and riding like the wind, with flaming cheeks and streaming hair ; while a panting groom, whose business it was to see that they didn't break their necks too much, toiled after them in vain.

Up and down, at a steady jog-trot, the hired hacks went with their burdens of disordered livers ; plump men riding under doctor's orders to get their weight down, and ruddy-faced, half-pay majors, with fierce moustaches and tempers to match. But these are the democracy of the Row, and their horses won't budge until someone shouts, " Bank, Bank, Piccadilly ! " For real birth, blood, and breeding you must look by the rails, where Captain O'Trigger and Lady Betty are exchanging airy persiflage with their pedestrian friends.

" Well," said Low, " what about it ? These are the oppressors, my boy ! Are you going to rise in your might and squelch one ? "

" Not to-day," I said. " They're all much too big. You find me a little one,





and I'll see what I can do. But just at the moment my sympathies are all with the idle rich. I like 'em ; and when I've made a few more Bradburys out of the oppressor, I'm going to join the merry throng myself. I've always wanted one of those high-class horses—the sort that live on soap and foam at the mouth. . . . But what is this coming down like a wolf on the fold ? ”

A cloud of dust whirled into the middle distance, and from it emerged a fiery steed, with a young man clasping it round the neck as if he loved it.

Now, common people would have screamed at the sight, but not the patrons of the Row. That sort of thing isn't done.

Turning his head slowly, the gallant captain glanced at the runaway, shifted his cigarette, and murmured, “ I say, you know—what ? ” while Lady Betty, raising her lorgnette, looked and laughed quietly.

“ I thought so ! ” she said. “ It's poor Billy again. He *will* buy these ex-Derby winners and let them get away with him. I'll lay 10 to 1 he swallows his eyeglass before he pulls up.”

As we sat beneath the trees, page after page of Burke and Debrett sauntered slowly along, with Mrs. Wellington-Boote from Pimlico and the Gunnersbury Clutterbucks ; nodding to the riders, saluting friends, and doing their best to work up an appetite for lunch. Behind them, tall foxgloves and geraniums flamed with the pomp of midsummer ; and behind these again the grass was dotted with the recumbent forms of the idle poor.

The distant Park looked like a battle-field from which the dead had not yet been retrieved. Bundles of rags lay here and there, their faces turned to the sky ; and only one of them had enough energy to writhe beneath the heel of the oppressor.

A fat and rosy man he was, with a sweet smile on his face, as if he dreamed of his happy childhood days, or a land where the beer was free.

But a misguided wasp mistook his face for a peony ; and the way that man writhed was perfectly sweet. Waving his punctured bowler at the insect, he entreated it to shove off ; whereupon the wasp, recognizing by the language that it wasn't a peony at all, apologized and withdrew.

“ And all this,” I told Low, “ all this is ours, to have and to hold. The beautiful horses, the dashing bucks and charming belles, the trees and the flowers, the sky and the sunshine—all are ours, free, gratis, and for nothing. As one who has paid his second instalment, I feel as if I owned the place.”

“ Quite so ! ” said Low. “ But here comes the johnny for the chair money. Twopence each, I believe. So what about it ? ”

“ By Jove ! ” I said, loudly, “ is it as late as all that ? Really, I think we'd better be getting along. But not too fast. We can sit down again when he's gone by.”

A DAY AT SOUTHEND

GOING down, we leaned out of the train, sniffing at intervals for sign of the salt sea's tang, and the odour of the ozone from the blue and briny ocean. But I think the wind must have been in the wrong direction, or else the ozone had gone bad.

For at Barking we had to shut the windows and pull down the blinds, owing to the activities of a neighbouring fish-glue factory ; while at Upminster we ran into the rush hour at the gas works, and the train had to slow down to get through it.

But we found the ozone all right at Southend. It came up to the station to meet us, from a cockle stall round the corner. Hence, as Low remarked, the name of the principal thoroughfare, High Street.

Cockles and Southend rock seem to be the staple diet of the natives, the rate of exchange for the former being 10d. a pint and bring your own basin. Smaller quantities may be obtained in little saucers, complete with vinegar, at tuppence a go.

We decided to give the shellfish a miss, and having laid in a supply of pink rock and a bucket and spade, we hurried off to the front to dally with the bright blue ocean.

Judging by the crowds on the promenade this is evidently the height of Southend's season. The place was packed with brown and beaming humanity ; bright with fair women and brave men. In twos and threes the girls swung along the promenade, dressed in their whitest muslin frocks, with the skin of their noses hanging in rags, and the pattern of their open-work blouses stencilled on their shoulders by the sun.

As they walked they giggled and waggled their dorothea-bags, and cast shy but encouraging glances at the young men behind them. And no wonder ! For your Southend buck is an attractive boy when he's got 'em all on. With tennis shirt open at the neck, bright cummerbund, and well-pressed flannels, he spends his long and languorous days

Flaunting beneath a so-called Panama
Beside the so-called sea.

But we had no eyes for these things. It was the sea we wanted, and as we sped along Low quoted lumps of Swinburne at me :

" I will go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the sea. . . "

with much more to the same effect.

Alas ! our luck was out. So was the tide—about four miles. Southend had gone dry. There wasn't a drop of water in sight ; nothing but a great, grey stretch of primal ooze, inhabited by three children, one old boot, and a derelict mud pie.

Dashing his pail to the ground, Low loosed on me the vials of his wrath. He demanded sea, with a head on it ; billows and breakers, and the flashing of the furious foam.

"It's not a bit of good nagging at me," I said. "You heard me ask for tickets to Southend-on-Sea. You heard the emphasis I put on the last two words, and you saw the ultramarine posters outside the station. But, as the booking clerk pointed out, the railway company cannot guarantee the proximity of the ocean, and refuses to accept any responsibility in the matter. So we must make the best of it. Anyway, there's heaps of ozone about."

"Ozone!" sneered Low. "That isn't ozone. That's the corpse of a cockle that's died of thirst, and I want my money back."

"But I know the sea used to be here," I insisted, "because from the end of the pier, on a fine day, with a powerful telescope, you could hear the breakers quite plainly. But that was before the drought. However, since the sea won't come to Southend—Mahomet must needs go to the mountain." And I made for the turnstile.

The pier, I learnt, is 2,360 yards long, and people who start out to do it all usually take their lunch and tea with them, and another pair of boots.

But the journey is well worth it. At the other end we found the élite of the place doing their best to drain life to the lees. In long rows they stood, leaning over the rails and gazing into the offing, where, after a time, I could make out an occasional billow going by.





With the aid of a pair of binoculars we had a splendid paddle, after which we joined the merry throng by the bandstand.

In immaculate white ducks the gallant sea-dogs lolled in their deck chairs, with newspapers over their faces, drinking in the healing breezes and other things, while the ladies sat round eating shrimps and throwing the heads at their sweethearts with gay abandon.

Apart from its length, I have only one fault to find with the pier. An army of carpenters was building an annexe to the extension, and the authorities had omitted to give them a programme of the music. Thus you had the band playing "Tales of Hoffmann" while the carpenters were performing the "1812" Overture; and the combined effect was not good.

But that didn't worry the ladies. Refreshed by their shrimps, they danced merrily between the seats, until the pier shook beneath them. And sometimes they kept time with the band, and sometimes with the carpenters, until, tired out, they flopped into their chairs and fanned themselves with the empty shrimp bags.

After another look at the distant ocean, and two more deep breaths of ozone, we started back on the long trail to dear old England. The ozone at the end of the pier, I noticed, was of a slightly thicker quality than that in the High Street, and seemed to have more bite to it. The first trombone, who, in the course of his business, inhales large gulps of the stuff, is a living tribute to its fine nourishing qualities; and when he got down among the low notes it was all we could do to keep our hats on.

After cockles, one of the leading amusements of Southend is the automatic machine. There is a whole street of them on the pier, about half a mile from the coast, and there we had a glorious time. At a penny each we obtained photographs of our future wives and husbands, a peep into our fortunes, a bottle of scent which beat the cockles by a mile, and, last of all, to wind up a perfect day, "The Execution."

However depressed the holiday-maker may be, there is always that to cheer him up; and I can see the miserable visitor on a wet Sunday spending penny after penny on that grim sight and comforting himself with the thought, "Well, whatever has happened to me, I've managed to dodge that, so far."

It is indeed a splendid spectacle; with the solemn bell tolling eight, the trap-door, the hooded criminal, the rope, the chaplain waving his arms, and then—click!—and he's gone. The doors close, the black flag is run up, and, if you like it, you put in another penny and do it all over again.

I suppose we spent about three shillings on automatic machines, and then Low dragged me away.

"This gay and hectic life," he said, "is wearing you out. Your face is haggard, and there are dark rings round your eyes. So what about the 5.30 fast?"

And thus it was. The last we saw of Southend was a small child in paddling breeches, stamping its feet on the front, and yelling for waves, while its mother tried in vain to comfort it with a cockle.

WITH THE BOYS AT BILLINGSGATE

WHEN Billingsgate is busy, and the gutters run with brine, it is no place for glacé kid and dove-grey spats. Snowshoes or ski would be more to the point. And even thus shod, you would need to tread like Agag, to be as surefooted as a goat, if you would keep your end up on its slippery pavement.

At peril of our bright young lives, we waded ankle deep through an evil broth of salt and slush and submerged offal, shoved about by hurrying porters, pursued by trucks of fish intent on murder, and deafened by the roar of the market place.

For fish is a delicate and highly perishable commodity, and must needs be dealt with quickly. Those cod and halibut who yesterday were sporting in the North Sea are to-day very limp and dead, and their business is urgent. So from 5 a.m. until nearly midday the market works at top pressure to get the goods to your table and restaurant before they have lost the bloom of youth.

High in their little pulpits the salesmen stand, yelling one against the other, bellowing the virtues of their plaice and haddocks; red-faced men with lungs of brass and voices like the Bull of Bashan.

At their feet surges a crowd of suburban retailers and street hawkers, looking for bargains; whose little carts and donkey barrows are waiting outside to hurry home with the spoil.

The place is a babel of frenzied shouts, of fierce arguments and quarrels, mixed with the rattle of barrows, the banging of crates, the clatter of empties, and the roar of the hurrying porters; the whole making one enormous and terrifying hullabaloo.

Down in Dulwich and up in Highgate cooks and housewives are waiting for their filleted plaice and lemon soles, and the porter has no time to be polite. He just heaves up his dripping burden and runs; and if you get in his road you had better run too—the other way for preference.

Over all this clamour there hangs like a heavy cloud that ancient and fish-like smell that should have been included in Billingsgate's coat-of-arms. It is indeed an awesome odour, a penetrating perfume which creeps right into your pockets and clings to your clothes for a week. It is a satisfying smell, rich and feeding, and it ought to be served with vinegar and red pepper.

Only once did the market pause in its labours. In navigating a treacherous passage through the deep-sea ooze I must have stepped on a wandering winkle or a discarded cod's liver, which caused me to perform some surprising and

an unknown tongue, while his clerk made notes in a book beside him. I am not quite sure what happened, but I think Low must have sneezed, or winked, or something. Anyway, it was taken for a bid, and the next thing we knew he was the sole owner of a large sack of whelks, guaranteed all alive-o ! And Low doesn't like whelks a little bit.

So as soon as the noise began again we left on tiptoe, and sought refuge at the other side of the market place. There the artist person fell in love with a fish-porter's hat, and desired to sketch it. But the fish-porter had other fish to fry, and would not stand still.

However, I soon found him another one, whom I intrigued with foolish globe-trotter questions about the price of crabs, and dabs, his hours of business, his work, and whether or not he liked it ; so that he had perforce to stand still. But that fish-porter had a keen and penetrating eye, and halfway through my catechism he stopped and glanced across to the distant sketch-book.



OUR EMBARRASSMENT ON BEING RECOGNISED

For a few seconds he gazed at the artist, who was looking round for a bolt-hole. Then he recognized the eyebrows, and " Hi ! " he said. " Ain't that Low ? "

I nodded and touched wood. One never knows in Billingsgate.

" And I suppose you're I," said the fish-porter. Then he turned and called to a colleague.

" Here, Sandy ! Here's Low and I come down to draw our pictures. Bill ! George ! Jim ! Here's Low and I. Run and find Old Smiler and get his face in the paper." And as the news went round there arose a great shout of " Mind your pockets, boys ! Mind your pockets ! " I do hope they were addressing us, and not their friends.

Next to its fish, Billingsgate is most famous for its language. It is the home of purple patches as Sheffield is of steel, but I have heard strange stories of late concerning an alleged falling off in this commodity.

That may be so ; but the business of this combination of talent is to be as truthful as the police will permit. Therefore I feel bound to place it on record that the men of Billingsgate *do* swear. I have heard them. Frequently. Further than that I dare not go.

There is a lot of ice about the place, and maybe they do it to keep themselves

warm. The melancholy fact remains that they do, in moments of deep emotion, drop into the local patois, which, fortunately perhaps, neither Low nor I is acquainted with.

For example. There was a porter running hither and thither with a lot of dead cod on his head, inquiring feverishly for the fishmonger who had bought it. But that gentleman had gone to get a cup of tea or something. He wasn't there. And the porter continued to run round and round, yelling "Barker!" at the bottom of his voice. Barker he wanted, and Barker he would have. Barker!

Moreover, until he found Barker he had to carry that heavy trunk of fish balanced on his head, with the icy water dribbling down behind his ears.

Suddenly, as he took a sharp corner, a man stepped out of the crowd into his path. Low shuddered. I crossed my fingers, and the porter crossed his legs. The rest was a haze of flying fish, crushed ice, and curses. And when they picked themselves up, behold, the other party to the collision, the obstacle, was the man Barker!

And, really, you should have heard that porter. He was splendid. Not since Uncle James got locked in the chicken house have I heard such a finished performance. He turned on Mr. Barker, and described him minutely, without haste, from the top of his hat to the soles of his feet. He told Mr. Barker exactly what he thought of his face, his fish, and his future, in jewels five words long. He poured out the vials of his wrath upon him—quart vials, with the long pull; and when they were empty he did it all over again.

"Ah!" said one who stood near. "Poor old George is getting old. He ain't nothing like so good as he used to be. You ought to have heard him a few years ago in his best days."



AT THE HORSE SHOW

UNLESS you were born in a stable and cut your milk teeth on a hunting crop, it is a little difficult to keep your end up among the horsey folk at Olympia.

However, by dropping a few judicious remarks about hocks and glanders, and giving vent to an occasional "Tantivy!" I managed to create the impression that Tattersall's was my spiritual home. (Whereas, quite between ourselves, all I know about horses is which end the collar goes on.)

But it required no expert eye to appreciate the beauty of those equine aristocrats in the ring. Blood and breed in every line, poetry in every movement, they trod the tan with all the pomp and circumstance of a Turveydrop, and took the hurdles like winged stags, with eyes aflame and nostrils cracking.

"Now watch this one," said Low. "Number 19, Mephistopheles, bay gelding, 16 hands, and the usual number of feet. There's acting for you, my lad! There's verve and abandon!"

"Not so dusty," I admitted. "A little short in the withers, perhaps, and his near-side hock looks a bit groggy. Quite good, however. Quite good!" Which so impressed a gent on my left that he asked me if I knew anything for the big 'un.

Watching the jumping is a nerve-racking business. We all sat there with our nails driven into our palms, sweating profusely as the leppers came round; and at each obstacle we gritted our teeth and rose in our seats, our naked and perspiring souls going out to the brave horses, and absolutely hiking them over the jumps.

And when they cleared them, "Aaaaaaah!" we all said; and when they didn't, 'Oooooohh!' we groaned.

A lot of men whose hearts won't stand the strain, take refuge in the bar while



the jumping is going on. By listening carefully to the "Ahs!" and "Ohs!" and the crash of falling timber, you can tell just how each competitor is doing, at the same time imbibing the nerve tonic as before.

There was only one unseemly incident in the performance. After the last

of the harness class had jingled out of the arena, the place was suddenly invaded by a mob of cowboys in red shirts, who started to shoot the audience with pistols in a most ungentlemanly manner.

Mounted on mustangs and bronchos and things, they tore round the ring, yelling like fiends, and taking pot shots at the big drum and the first trombone. There was a fat policeman at the gate, but he seemed too scared to do anything; and the top-hatted judges had all bunked, taking the presentation cups with them.

I was just going to ring up Scotland Yard, when Low pointed out that this was a display by the



Metropolitan Mounted Police, and was quite in order.

"They're only bobbies, really," he said; "and you can sit down. Unless, of course, you're afraid of being recognized."

Well, I have often admired these gentlemen at royal processions and things. The way they make their horses tread on your toes, and wag their tails in your face, is marvellous; but I had no idea they could do things like this.

Riding at the pace of a Derby winner, they leaned from their saddles and picked up handkerchiefs from the ground like lightning—a feat which must be very useful when they are chasing pickpockets. I was hoping to see them arrest a burglar in the same way, but evidently there wasn't one on the premises.



Presently a gang of Red Indians, complete with war paint and whoops, came in and spoilt the fun ; and there was quite a nasty fracas, with much promiscuous murder, at which all the little children screamed with delight.

However, the police evidently had a clue, for in less than ten minutes they had thoroughly killed all the Indians and searched their pockets ; after which

the band played "Rule Britannia," and the corpses came to life and went out to wash off the blood. Feathers and war-whoops by Clarkson.

One of the most interesting features at Olympia is the stables in the annexe, where the dear ladies coo over the brave horses, and give them lump sugar and "chocs" when the trainers aren't looking.

Here you meet those delightful men with the bandy legs and side-whiskers, who live on chewed straw: men with horseshoe tie-pins, funny bowler hats, and equine "plus fours" with wonderful draught-board patterns.

Without these things, I was told, it is impossible to get a job in any decent stable; and unless your legs are so shaped that you couldn't stop a pig in a narrow passage no respectable horse will look at you.

WITH THE WATER NYMPHS AT CHISWICK

HOT wasn't the word, unless you reinforced it with at least one helpful adjective. In Fleet Street the lamp-posts drooped like sticks of fresh-cooked asparagus, and Low and I felt like the melted butter that goes therewith.

"What I want," said the artist, "is a large and juicy water-melon, so that I can sit in one half and eat the other." But the best the greengrocer could do was a blood orange, and that was several sizes too small.



DOWN AMONG THE TIDDLERS.

"Besides," I said, "it sounds a sticky business, and would certainly cause a crowd to collect. Personally, my one desire is to immerse myself in ice-water up to the neck, and stay there until the weather breaks. In the words of the medical profession, I think Chiswick is indicated. There is a beautiful open-air bath——"

"Chiswick?" said Low, and raised his eyebrows. "I have heard of the place, but is it quite—what shall I say?"

"Oh, quite!" I assured him. "You mustn't let your mind be poisoned by the photographs in the picture papers. They are generally over-exposed."

"And over-developed," said Low.

"But you must understand," I said, "that those plump and merry maidens who sit round the edge and smoke cigarettes, those buxom mermaids whose costumes and evolutions would make Mrs. Grundy turn in her grave, are not Chiswick folk at all. They are interlopers from less fortunate suburbs, whose one ambition is to get their pictures in the papers and keep their costumes dry."

As we clicked through the turnstile there came to our ears the sound of splashing and spluttering, mixed with feminine squeaks and squeals.

One damsel who was taking the waters had evidently swallowed an overdose. Bubbles arose, mixed with submarine yells and gurglings. But there was no danger. Without the slightest hesitation fifteen gallant men dashed to her aid, and in two seconds she was most efficiently rescued, and resuscitated with tea

and cigarettes and toffee. . . . And what do you think the trouble was? She had forgotten to take off her wrist-watch.

It was a splendid sight that met our tired eyes; that green and limpid lake set in lilacs and laburnums, crowded with fat men and tender girls, chromatic with saucy costumes, and shrill with the cries without which no woman can bathe properly.

Compared with the smart turnouts of the Chiswick mermaids, Low's costume was not exactly what one would call chic. It bagged at the knees and in several other places, and failed to show off his figure to the best advantage. That is the worst of these Urban District Council costumes. They are cut in three sizes only—fat, medium, and thin; and if the attendant at the gate has not a good eye for form, you are liable to be served out with a misfit.

An exploring toe assured us that the water really was cool and wet, and with two distinct splashes we went off the deep end amid the applause of the multitude. And believe me, it was good down there among the tiddlers. Those dancing, sunlit ripples washed away our worries.

Our temperatures fell with a thud, and we gambolled and kicked like bean-fed two-year-olds at pasture.

Suddenly I heard a gasping cry from Low at the other end of the bath. Quick as light I slipped in my top gear and flew to his assistance. Was it cramp? Had he swallowed his pencil and sketch-book? Or had a fat man dived in on top of him?

"I say," he panted, "d'you think it's all right? My money, I mean? I've left it in my pocket."

"Of course it is!" I said. "Don't you understand that this is Chiswick? They don't do that sort of thing down here. However, if you'd feel safer with it in your hand, get it by all means." And I left him for the shallow end where the ladies were making merry.

On the high diving board a pink and blue nymph stood contemplating the water below and waiting until sufficient people were looking her way. Like the Bath of Psyche, she stood (with a few more clothes on, perhaps), shivering delightfully and making a dreadful fuss about it. Then she dived. Her lithe, straight body shot through the air, cleft the water as cleanly as a dabchick, and she rose again, shaking the pearls from her marble shoulders like a lovely sea-born Venus.

As Low remarked, that alone was worth the price of admission.

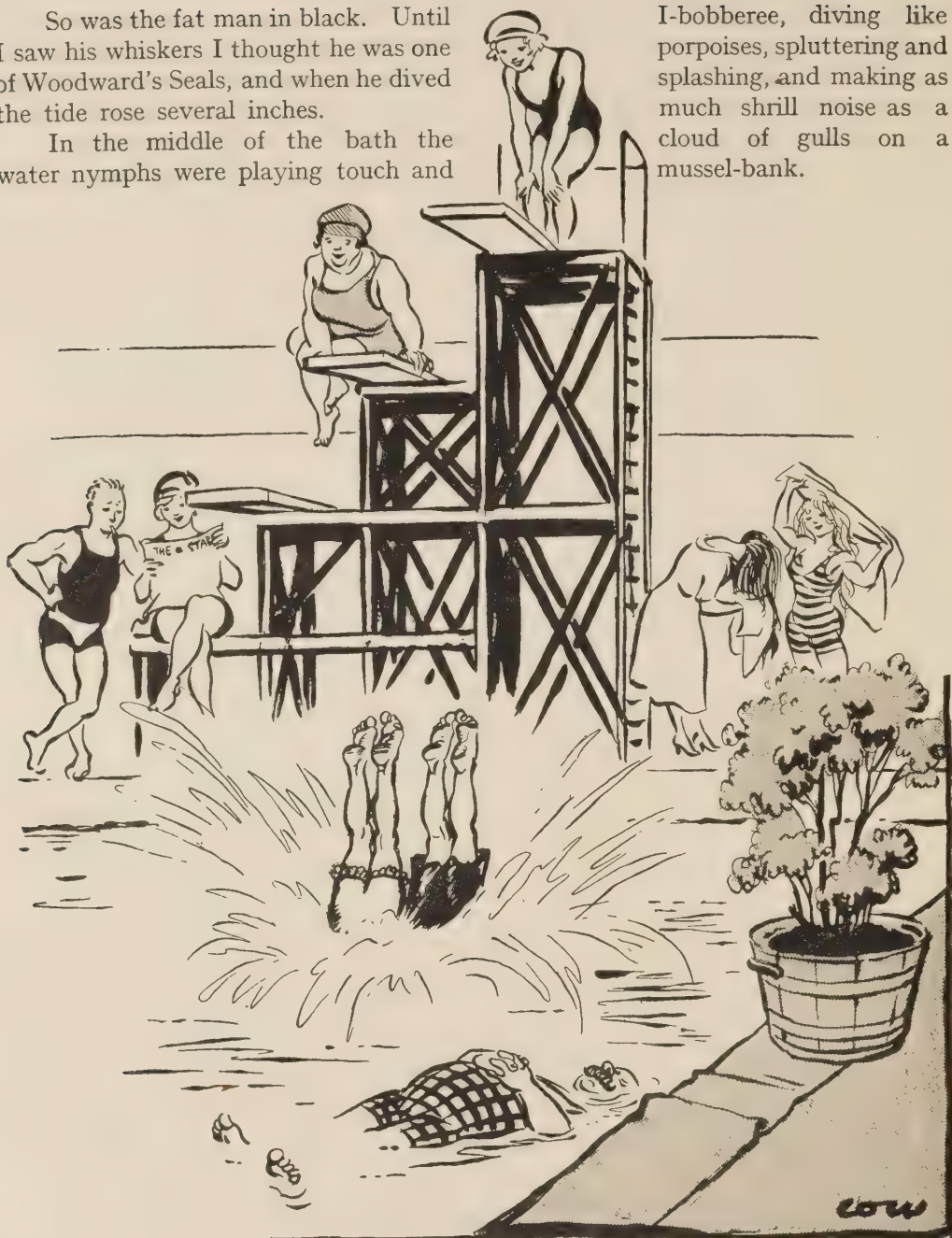


RESPECTABLE CHISWICKERS
DISAPPROVING OF SUCH
GOINGS ON.

So was the fat man in black. Until I saw his whiskers I thought he was one of Woodward's Seals, and when he dived the tide rose several inches.

In the middle of the bath the water nymphs were playing touch and

I-bobberee, diving like porpoises, spluttering and splashing, and making as much shrill noise as a cloud of gulls on a mussel-bank.



Near the turnstile, sweating beneath his hot helmet, stood a policeman watching for fouls and other disorderly conduct. As I remarked to Low, it was a shame to put him there in a thick serge uniform. Why not a blue bathing costume, with armlet, and helmet, and boots to give him authority? Then, in the event of his services being required at the deep end, he could draw his truncheon and dive in to arrest the malefactor. Under the present system he must wait until the offender comes out.

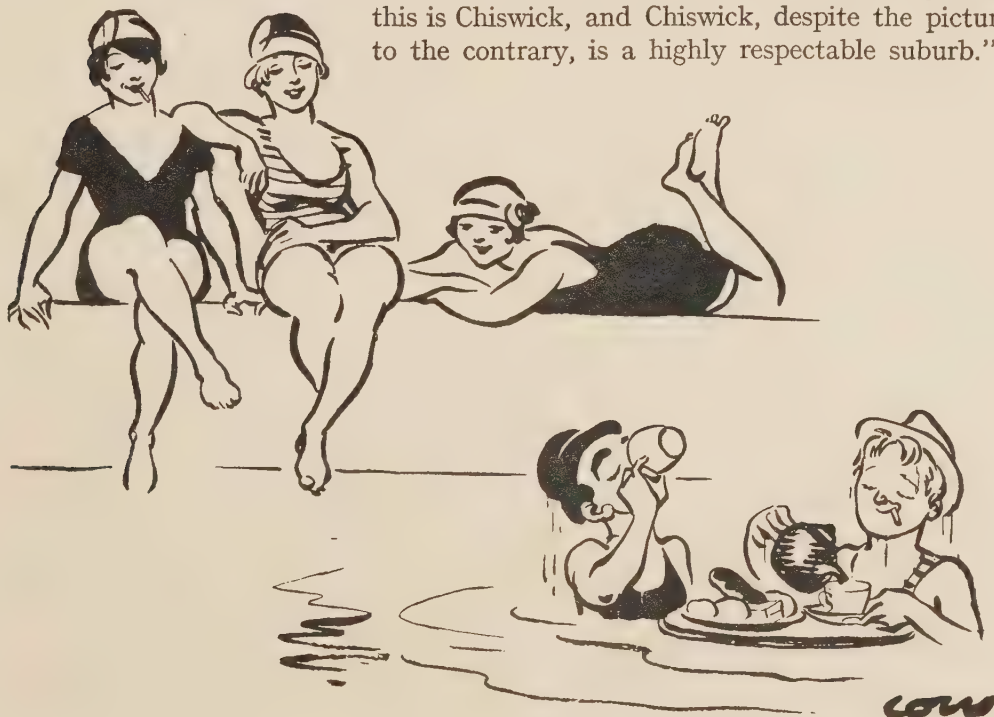
Round the shady sides of the bath sat or sprawled the sun-worshippers in graceful postures, drinking tea and feeding the sparrows with cake crumbs.

We had tea, too; but as the slit in my costume had spread, I had to take mine half-submerged, which probably accounts for the tadpole I found in it. However, it was only a little one.

Long before the whistle went to mark the end of the mixed bathing session, the coolth of the place had sunk right into our bones, so that we had not the slightest desire to get into civilised trousers again.

Low wanted to walk home as he was, with bowler hat and stick, but the officials thought not. The clothes he was wearing, they pointed out, were municipal property, stamped across the embonpoint with the legend, "Not to be taken away."

"Moreover," I said, "you must not forget that this is Chiswick, and Chiswick, despite the pictures to the contrary, is a highly respectable suburb."



IN LONDON'S LATIN QUARTER

WHAT I needed most at the moment was something to lean against, some place where I could lie down and let the silly world go round without me helping to shove. But Low wouldn't have that. He said the spring had gone to my head, and I must keep moving or I should die.

"Look at it!" he said; and waved a hand at the sunset with an air of proprietorship. "The birds, the buds, the baa-lambs, the buses. All Nature on the binge. Don't you feel that you want to be up and doing?"

I said I didn't. Anything but!

"Don't you want to galumph, to sound the loud timbrel, and generally kick up a dust?" he asked.

Again I denied it, especially the bit about the timbrel, which I am afraid I play rather badly.

"What you want," said the artist, "is more exercise. Not too strenuous at first, mind; but some mild form of athletics, just exciting enough to produce a gentle perspiration."

"Very well!" I yawned. "Then what about a game of dominoes?" And thus it was.

Now there is only one place in London where you can play dominoes in the correct atmosphere, and that is the Café Royal. For dominoes is a dull game, and to get the most out of it should be accompanied by loud cries and extravagant gestures; so that a simple game of fives-and-threes sounds something between a Rugby scrum and a revolution.

At the Café Royal they do the thing properly. They wave their arms. They pull their beards. For two (2) pins they would pull each other's beards. They slam the five-four down with a bang that chips the marble table, and salute the double-six with picturesque anathemas.

I told Low all this. He got quite excited about it, and sharpened several pencils.

"It is our Latin Quarter," I explained. "The rendezvous of Rodolphe and Marcel, of Mimi and Musette. There, too, we shall find the wits and wiseacres of artistic London; the cognoscenti, the litterati, the dilettanti, and the gondoleiri, to say nothing of the barber round the corner." Low sharpened several more pencils and bought an india-rubber.

The giant in charge of the door looked at us rather curiously as we went in; but that was probably because we hadn't any side-whiskers.

"Side-whiskers," I told Low, "are the caste mark of your true Bohemian. Not the grey weepers associated with churchwardens and family butlers, but those nutty little growths about halfway down the ear. However, it is too late to sprout a pair now, so we must make the best of it."

The red plush seats were packed with people; men with black square beards and waving arms; fat men fast asleep behind foreign newspapers; thin men shuffling the ivories with many a parbleu and thousand thunders: men (with side-whiskers as above) in deep converse over strange drinks, expounding, explaining, expostulating; and in the corner, Mimi, with cigarette and long glass, and a merry, roving eye.

They are excellent waiters at the Café Royal, but unfortunately their knowledge of their native tongue is purely elementary. Of the finer shades and nuances



DISGUISED AS NATIVES OF CHELSEA, WE "DO" BOHEMIA

they seem to know nothing; and after struggling with one for ten minutes, Low gave it up and left it to me.

By pointing to the menu and shrugging my shoulders until my waistcoat split I managed to order some Œufs Brouillés au Rognons; but I am afraid my collar-bone is ruined for life.

It was worth it, though. If there is one thing they can cook at the Royal it is Œufs Brouillés. . . . My word! Or, as Low ejaculated at intervals to keep his end up, "Ou la, la!"

By the way, he was quite right about the waiter's French. It was not at all good. For instance:

We désiré a certain sweet. I forget the name of it, but it contains blancmange, and jam, and jelly, and pieces of orange, and strawberries and cream, all frozen together into one glorious iceberg.

Getting that across the footlights and into that waiter's dull pate was a bit of a proposition, but I did it. Oh, yes, I did it! Thus:

Blancmange, imitation of. This is very difficult. I stood up, I drew with my fingers a great mountain, so ; covered with ice and snow, so ! Get the idea ? Mont Blanc—Blancmange ! V'la !

For the jam, I smacked my lips, thus, and rubbed my waistcoat. . . . Yes,

it's all very well for you to laugh, but how the dickens would *you* imitate jam ? . . . Very well, then !

For the jelly I shivered, thus conveying also an impression of ice.

The waiter (or garçon), who had been watching me closely, here began to show signs of intelligence.

His eye lit up, his face unfroze, and he burst into language.

"Ah, oui, m'sieu ! Certainement ! I get you ! Oui, oui ! Yes ! Pas demi ! Maintenant ! V'la ! So ! Half a jiffy !" And he vanished like a—like a garçon (or waiter) in pursuit of the wild pour-boire.

"You see !" I said to Low. "It's quite easy when you know how. But I wish he'd waited for my imitation of the straw-

berries and cream. I should like you to see that. . . . Ah, here he comes !"

"V'la m'sieu !" said the panting waiter, and laid on my plate—an A.B.C. Time-table !

With wonderful presence of mind I took the book and looked up a train to



Blundellsands. . . . It is a satisfying station, with departures from London as for Liverpool. Sixteen times I said it, quickly, without stopping ; and it did me a world of good. Blundellsands is so bracing. Ou la-la !

Dominoes came next, and a very tiring sport, too, if you play it in the right Café Royal manner. We in England pursue the domino in a half-hearted, effeminate way, laying our bones down quietly, and talking as if we were in a sick-room.

DOMINOES



But they order these things better in Regent Street ; and, after watching for a few minutes, we soon got the hang of it.

Grinding my teeth, I seized a fistful of cards, hurled a curse at Low, and planked down the five-four. Peste !

Pushing his hat back, Low shouted, " Conspuez le five-four ! " and played the double-five.

" A bas le cartoonist ! " I yelled, and smashed down the double-four. He had to draw. He had to draw again. Canaille ! Cochon ! Blue wind !

" Avez vous la plume of the gardener's wife, NO ! " he spat ; and he was right. I hadn't ! But I played the double-six, the six-three, the three-five, and so ran out, leaving him with 27 spots and a temperature. . . . Helas ! Hein ! Mille tonnerres, or words to that effect. And, of course, Ou la-la !

We waved our arms like windmills, we hissed like syphons and serpents, we broke a wineglass and a brace-button. But no one took the slightest notice. For that is the custom of the country.

Three games left me as limp as a stick of asparagus, but richer by twopence of Low's good money.

Yet he didn't care, bless you ! Tilting his hat to a dissipated 3 a.m. angle, he strode into the night. . . . One of the dogs, obviously.

" Not at all ! " I said, outside. " My dear fellow, not at all ! I've won, and you must let me pay for the taxi. . . . Porter ! Porter ! (I say, Low, what the dickens is the French for 'Boots' ?) Hi, Bottines ! Voulez-vous er-apportez-moi un voiture—a taxi. Toute suite, mon cher Bottines ! "

Said the porter : " Begob, sir ! A taxi, is it ? An' they do be as scarce to-night as Good Fridays, so they do ! "



AT THE PROMS

ONCE upon a time it was hardly safe to go to Queen's Hall unless you were in dire need of at least two large hair-cuts.

Leonine locks, and an expression suggestive of rapture or green apples, were the hall-marks of the musical "fan," and to be without them was to brand yourself the complete Philistine.

Those days have passed. Here and there you meet one of the Inner Brotherhood, the "perceptively intense and consummately utter"; but generally speaking the modern Promenader does not run to hair much. He is quite an ordinary chap, an everyday young man—

A commonplace type,
With a stick and a pipe,
And a half-bred black and tan.

The crowd we barged into the other night in Langham Place was just like that. They might have been, and probably were, stockbrokers' clerks, tram conductors, civil servants, architects, grass widowers, wireless operators, young men studying for the Church, or anything you can think of.

There was about a quarter of a mile of them lined up at the front door, and most of them had a girl in tow. Quite ordinary girls they were, each with a packet of toffee and a powder-puff with which to while away the interval.

The first item on the programme was a recitation by a gentleman in gilt-edged trousers. He stood at the top of the steps, and with fine fervour and a wealth of gesture recited the following pathetic lines, to wit:

"Per-lease take your tickets hon the right and left. Both barriers. Balcony seats round the corner."

He said it so often and so loudly that long before we got inside Low and I knew it off by heart; and when we were deep in the basement he was still going it.

As we wandered about in the crowded promenade the orchestra dribbled in slowly, nodded to their friends in the audience, and sat down to oil up their instruments and squirt little samples of melody at us, just to show what they could do if they went all out.

This is really the only time the second trombone gets a chance to make himself heard. In the middle of the "Eroica" Symphony or the "1812" his best efforts

are lost in the general welter of cacophony, and he doesn't show up any more than a tear drop in the Atlantic.

But before Sir Henry takes charge he puts in some healthy blasts down among the big, low notes, so that people in the front row have a job to keep their clothes on.

"In case I don't get a look in later on," he says, "how's this for an elephant defending its young? . . . Brrrrrrrrrrp!" And out go the footlights.

Meanwhile, the audience were walking round, looking for eligible sites on which to take up their stance, and talking learnedly of things about which we knew nothing.

"But, my dear man, Bach is a corpse, dead dry bones. It is to the modern school that we must look for light and leading. Stravinsky now. Or Casella. Colour, my dear chap! Verve! The splendid chromatic tints of his wonderful discords. . . ."

It seemed to be the thing to do, so we did it.

"Beethoven, my dear Low," I said. "Why, the stuff's flyblown. Mouldy! A stale cadaver! You should hear that little thing of Spaghetti's, Op. One I think it's called. Anyway, it goes like this: Per-oomp, per-oomp, per-oomp! You *must* know it.

"Now *there's* colour for you. It opens with a tête-de-negre movement for the strings, which is presently taken up by the 'cellos and tympani, who convert it into a pale cerise melody trimmed with splashes of joie-de-vivre and pink charmeuse, picked out with contrapuntal effects for the third piccolo. From this——"

"Oh, do be quiet," said Low. "Look at that girl over there. I thought you said they were all dead."

"Well, that one isn't," I admitted, "though, if you ask me, she ought to be. It is one of the old school, left over from the last decade, with modern trimmings. Very bobbed hair, tortoiseshell glasses, cigarette, Lenglen bandeau, and a large size in secret sorrows. She knows jolly well that she is the only person here who properly understands the true inwardness of Stravinsky and Prokofiev, and can spell their names, while all the rest of us are the Gadarene swine before whom these pearls are dropped. Now, in my humble opinion——"

"Sssssssh!" said 4,327 people; and Sir Henry, who had just come in, looked round at me and scowled.

MR. WOODHOUSE



It was a wonderful silence that descended on that vast audience. As if his wand were the original Gorgon's head, we stood suddenly transfixed, the preliminary whimpering of the fiddles ceased, and a man near me who was scratching his head as the selection started had to keep scratching it until it was over.



S'R'ENRY REFUSING
AN ENCORE

Running one hand through his already tousled hair, and weaving weird circles with the other, Sir Henry drew from his players a magic picture of towering cliffs and rolling clouds, great masses of colour, black chasms and terrifying storms, such as never painter put on canvas.

Anon he spurred his violins to further effort, menaced his brass with trembling fist, and shook his tangled mane till the drums thundered at his nod.

And when it was all over, we dropped our programmes and pipes and papers, and told him what we thought of it with both hands and our walking-sticks.

"Very fine," said Low; but after three chunks like that we decided that there was a certain sameness about these overtures.

"Don't you think something might be done," I asked, "to add to the gaiety of the business? Think of all that great audience loafing about there and doing absolutely nothing towards it. Why shouldn't we join in and give the thing a dash of pep? Now, I've got a Klaxon horn at home that I can very nearly play. . . . Or supposing one brought in a captive wasp and released it just as the trombone was getting up steam. Can't you see the gentleman who's playing outside-right trying to swat it with his double-bass? Or we might . . ."

"I'm sorry," said Low to a man behind, "but he's nothing to do with me at all. I didn't bring him here. He just followed me in."

Outside in the corridor that runs round the hall there is a long hot-water pipe, and on this, when the music gets too much for them, the worst cases come and sit to cool their fevered brows. With elbows on knees and fingers dragging at their hair they squat and writhe as if troubled by acute colic. From time to time, as when the French horn is doing something particularly yellow, you may

hear them groan and roll their eyes. From which one gathers that they are getting their money's worth, entertainment tax included.

The last item we heard was "Siegfried's Ordeal by Fire," a tempestuous chromo-lithograph in which the euphoniums used up enormous quantities of atmosphere, and the centre-forward trombone got quite red behind the ears.

Poor old Siegfried! He had a dickens of a time, and when the violins got well into it, it was obviously a case for a district call in the danger zone. But the brigade got it under at last, the damage being estimated at several thousand pounds. There were no casualties, but after it was over several strong men went into the bar to make sure that the outbreak was properly quenched.

For, as I remarked to Low, though music be the food of love, what about a couple of dry fingers? The which was carried *nem. con.*



AN AUTUMN IDYLL

AFTER a long and painful illness Summer has passed away. Nothing remains of her now but what Mr. Mantalini would call "a demd, damp, moist, unpleasant body."

Chronic dropsy was her complaint, I think; but during her three-month sickness she never had what you could really call a temperature. Most days it was well below normal, though once or twice it fluttered upwards and threatened to become almost warm.

And now she is dead. July, with its lilies and roses; August, that should have burnt us brown and given us new strength against the Winter; September, with scarlet poppies and golden corn; all these are with the snows of yesteryear, and nothing remains but a feeling that we have been swindled.

Yet hers was a glorious death. Nothing in her life became her like the leaving it. For she died

"... like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues

With a new colour as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till—'tis gone,
and all is grey."



**LONG EXPERIENCE HAS MADE THE
POULTRY CRITICAL IN MATTERS OF ART**

In spite of the sad life she had led us, it was with feelings of deep regret that Low and I journeyed to Kew Gardens to attend her obsequies. More than once I detected a trembling tear on the artist's eyelid; but he denied it hotly.

"It's the stink of camphor," he said, "from that old overcoat you're wearing."

This was no conventional funeral, with its sober suits of solemn black. The trees had decked themselves in scarlet and gold, a blaze of fire and smouldering embers. Yellow of elm, warm red of beech, pale gold of the willow and apple blending like music. And the great oaks, with their twisted arms, waving good-bye till their crisp brown leaves fell fast as snow.

Deep in the drenched grass the fallen acorns gleamed, with green and prickly conkers, and the rifled cases of the beechnuts, now snug in some frugal squirrel's larder.

In little clusters beneath the sighing trees stood pink and white toadstools, where at night the gnomes eat their funeral baked meats, and toast the Spring that is to come.

And the berries ; the hawthorns with their million little lamps hung out to light them through the Winter days ; and over them, a flurry of fluttering wings, where chaffinch and sparrow, thrush and blackbird, gorged themselves at this lavish feast.

So silent it was, too. In the blue haze between the trees one bird sang an ancient ditty of his mating days ; but there was no heart in it. And from a clump of sleeping rhododendrons a robin tried over the first few bars of " Good King Wenceslas."

Across the fallen leaves a squirrel rustled, stopped, with tail erect, and sprinted again, to hide some dainty trove in his cellar.

" This," I said to Low, " this is giving me the camelious hump. I feel all creepy, as if there were ghosts abroad, the shades of the Summer months."

" But, look at it," said the artist. " Look at the colours ! If only we could print it, I would paint you such a picture—— See that elm, green and pale gold, as if some spectral sun still lighted it ; and the maples are all on fire."

" Yes, quite good," I agreed. " And there, in the middle distance, is an optimistic lady, trying to put it down in cold and wishy-washy water-colours. Which reminds me that I also have a small tribute to the departed. Let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the death of Summer. Or, better still, pass me the sackbut, and listen while I give you the blues.

" The words are my own, and the tune—well, I'm not sure that there is a tune." With which I blew down my instrument, and straightway burst into the following dirge or threnody ; to wit :

" Summer has gone and the swallows have fled
Far to the South where the warm winds call ;
Coals have gone up and the roses are dead ;
Slowly and sadly the last leaves fall,
Golden and red,
To cover her head
And make for Summer a patchwork pall."

" If you feel like that about it," said Low, " why not have a small aspirin ? " But I ignored him and swept on :

" See in the shrubbery spiders are spinning
Webs that to-night will be jewelled with dew ;
Hark where the brave little robin's beginning
To tune up his whistle and carol anew.
Summer is dead,
Cover her head
With red-berried holly, dark cypress and yew.



Down from the tree-tops the last rags are flying
 Scarlet and russet and shimmering gold ;
 Blue in the hollows the low mist is lying,
 Ah, but it makes me feel chilly and old.
 Now the leaves glide adown,
 Fetch out the eiderdown.
 Really the evenings are getting quite cold."

But here a man with a red stripe down his trousers came out of the undergrowth and bade me desist.

"You can't do that sort of thing here," he said. "Besides which, please keep off the grass edge, organs and street cries prohibited."

"Quite so," I said. "Orders is orders. But there is ever so much more of it, my friend ; yards and yards. So if you wouldn't mind turning your back and pretending you can't hear me . . . I simply must get this off my chest. Thanks so much. Doh, me, soh, doh ! Prrrrm !

Yet though the winter do bellow and bite us,
 Roaring and raging and making us freeze,
 Spring will come after to cheer and delight us,
 Bringing her chorus to sing on the breeze.
 ' Blackbird and cuckoo,
 And the old rook who
 Makes such a fuss in the tops of the trees.
 Come, gentle Spring, have pity and hear us,
 Come to us quickly with all your delights.
 Summer is dead, and we've no one to cheer us
 Through the dark days and the bitter bleak nights,
 The muffin man's bell
 Is ringing her knell,
 And look at the price of the Best Derby Brights !"

"Now, look here," said the man in the brass-bound hat ; "if I have to tell you again—— I wouldn't mind so much if you could sing a little, but talking of lawn-mowers——"

Pearls before swine ! Sadly I shook the moisture from my lyre and the dust from my feet, and we departed.

But round the corner we came upon a bent figure labouring with trowel and dibber in the leaf-strewn border.

"And what are you burying there, my friend ?" I asked.

"Bulbses," he said. "Daffs and crocuses for next year."

So it really looks as if we are going to do it all over again. . . . Well, better luck next time !

AMONG THE SMITHFIELD MARTYRS

A I ARROW laden with bits of dead sheep chased us across the roadway, demented trolleys dashed round corners and sought to slay us, and a thousand horrible voices bade us mind our backs. Carefully avoiding a man hung with festoons of liver and lights, we leaped over a truck-load of hearts that looked considerably bowed down, and took cover behind a bunch of Argentine bullocks who had seen their best days.

"So this is Smithfield," said Low; "the place where the martyrs used to be burned at the stake."

HOW VEGETARIANS ARE MADE



and very dead meat, its garlands of sausages, and bladders of lily-white lard.

"Look!" he said suddenly; "over there. That man in the blood-stained bed-gown. What a face! Clytemnestra, just returned from the fatal bathroom, red with Agamemnon's blood. Lady Macbeth creeping from Duncan's deathbed. What a face!"

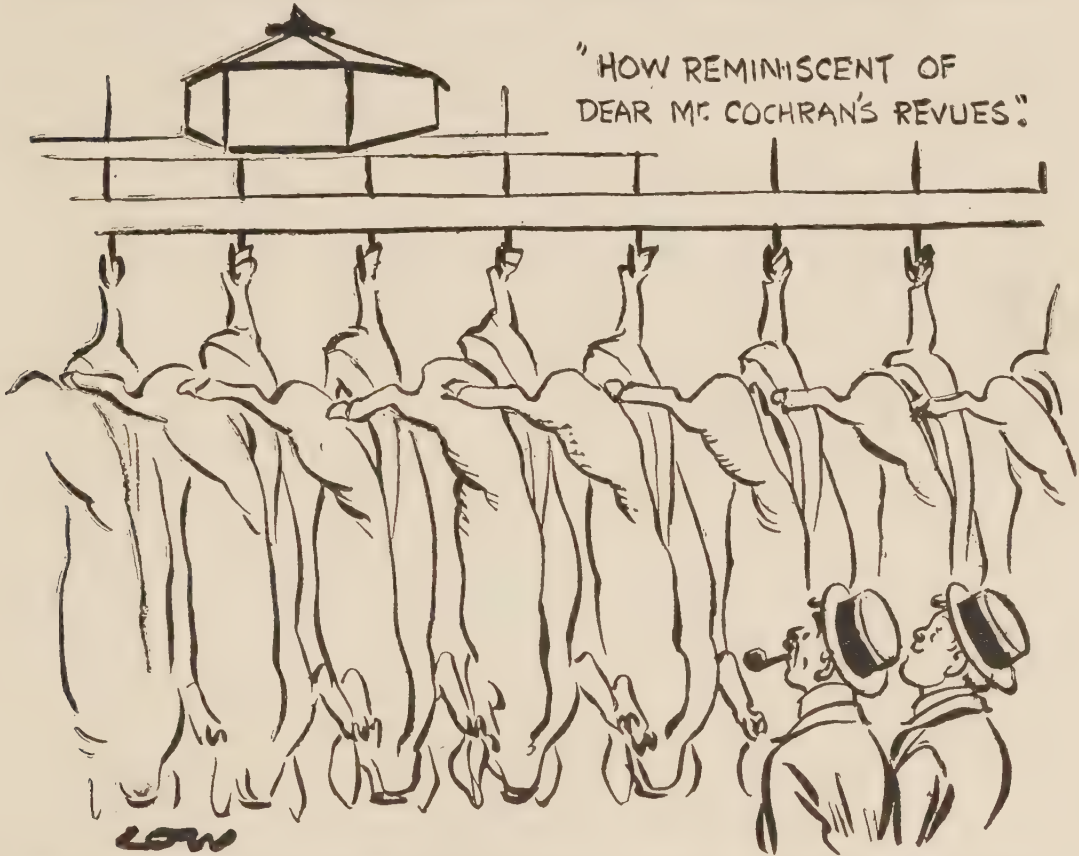
"Look here, Low," I whispered; "if you are going to talk like that I'm going home. Our friend the first murderer may be quite a nice fellow in his family circle, but here, on his native heath, he needs to be approached with tact and caution. His knowledge of the classics is small, and a long word like Clytemnestra may rouse him to fury. His name among his intimates is probably

"That is so," I assured him; "but it's altered a lot since those days. Owing to the shortage of martyrs, we now burn the steak instead."

I said this slowly, but he didn't seem a little bit impressed. His eye roved round the market place, with its reeking sawdust, its crop-haired men in crimson smocks, its long avenues of limp

Rarzo, and what he doesn't know about prime cuts and upper cuts isn't in the books. So please be more careful."

The Smithfield porter, like his colleague of Billingsgate, has a language and a costume all his own. Of the first, the least said soonest mended. The latter consists of a long night-shirt worn all day, a lump of sacking used as a comforter,



and a straw hat, by wearing which he tries to persuade himself that it is always June.

"If you wish to study one at close quarters," I said, "I will engage yonder jolly butcher in conversation, and you will then see what a really nice chap he is."

With that object in view, I took up my stand before a long row of defunct sheep, about five hundred of them, and inspected them with a cunning and expert eye. The butcher drew near.

"Buying anything to-day, sir?" he asked. "Fine lot of mutton there."

"Oh, so that's mutton, is it?" I said. "Well, well! To think that the poor creatures were once all alive and covered with wool. How sad! However,

in the midst of life, don't you know. But they look very plump and tender. With some mashed turnips and caper sauce—— Look here, Mr. Butcher, what can you do me a nice cutlet for ? ”

Slowly the butcher licked his lips and drew a hand across his moist forehead.

“ A cutlet ! ” he whispered hoarsely. “ A cutlet ! You couldn't do with two, I suppose ? Of all the perishing—— ” (But I think we'd better leave

that bit out, and take it as read : which it certainly was.) “ Boys,” he yelled, “ come and have a look. Here's an Amsterdam idiot coom oop for the Cambridgeshire, and he wants a cutlet to take back to auntie. . . . A cutlet ! Would you like a frill on it, sir ? Shall we deliver it or will you take it with you, you mouldy-eyed—— ” (We'll leave that bit out as well, if you don't mind.)

“ You see,” I said to Low, “ they're perfectly harmless. A trifle eloquent, perhaps, but as gentle as the little lambs they sell.”

LOW

PORTRAIT OF SMITHFIELD KNUIT
POLISHING FORELOCK
WITH PORK CHOP



PRESIDENT OF
SMITHFIELD CHORAL SOCIETY
IN ROBES OF OFFICE.



THE SEASON'S
FASHIONABLE TRIMMINGS
FOR GENTS' HEADWEAR.

Followed by a volley of kind inquiries as to where we obtained our hats, and whether our parents were aware of our absence from home, we wandered round the market ; pursued by fiery and untamed trollies, laden with tops-of-ribs in the rough, aitch bones, dangling oxtails, and saddles of mutton.

For this was Smithfield's rush hour, the high-tide of its labours. In every corner of London housewives were pondering over the Sunday joint, and these fragments were being hurried to Brixton and Tooting, to Hornsey and Highgate, and other places where they eat, there to be decked with yorkshire, baked and cauliflower for the weekly feast.

Presently we stopped in the middle of a long avenue of little pigs that had gone to market and died of it ; a whole regiment of them.

There are few things that look so completely dead as a dead pig. You can see at a glance that he has lost all interest in life, and doesn't care a dump whether he is boiled, or roast with apple sauce.

Limp and pink they hung head downwards, with one leg stuck gracefully out, like a row of petrified ballet girls. A real Danse Macabre, with marrowbones and cleavers for music.

There were miles of them; and up and down the alleyways ran men with yet more dead pigs gracefully curled round their necks; men with shining hair and wonderful "quiffs," the stretcher-bearers of Smithfield.

Little lambs, too, hung there in platoons, that once gambolled so nimbly on the lea; cows that would moo no more; hens whose last lay had been sung; and ducks for whom quack medicines could do nothing; an awesome sight, of which quite a little went a long way.

But when Low started talking about lunch——

"No," I sighed. "I shan't be able to look a chop in the face for weeks; so if it's all the same to you, I'd rather have a banana."



OUR
CHAGRIN
ON MEETING BASKET
OF TRIPE

LOST IN LONDON

THE taxi-driver said it was Charing Cross, but in my opinion he was just guessing. To me it looked more like Kennington Oval, Peckham Rye, Wormwood Scrubs, or Hackney Marshes ; though here and there it bore a close resemblance to the Isle of Dogs.

It was dark, pitch dark ; as dark as the inside of a whale. Darker even than that ; for the best whales, I believe, have lights inside them.

But this place, Charing Cross, Tooting Bec., Hampstead Heath, or whatever



"IT'S ALL RIGHT IF YOU KEEP UNDER IT."

It was so solid in parts that you could lean against it.

A clock struck twelve, but whether midday or midnight I could only guess. . . . Noon it must be, of course ; for somewhere in this dreadful darkness, or somewhere else Low was waiting to take me to lunch.

"Charing Cross at twelve," was the arrangement, and I began to wonder if the taxi man had sold me a pup ; driven me round and round the back streets of Kensington and dropped me in Bayswater. . . . It certainly looked like Bayswater. But then it also looked like Bermondsey, Brick Lane, and Battersea Park.

A figure loomed up through the gloom. "Excuse me," I said, "can you tell me——" But it was only a pillar-box.

Another figure loomed up through the gloom ; but this time I wasn't taking any chances. I stood still and let it loom. . . . And it really was a policeman.

it was, had no lights at all. It was entirely without form and void ; a waste of chaos, with the ghosts of dead motor-buses hooting in the bottomless pit.

I thought I knew something about London fogs ; from the thin pearl-grey mists to the glutinous and nourishing pea-soup variety. But this was thicker than anything I had ever tasted.

"Charing Cross?" he said. "Well, I hope not. I'm supposed to be on duty in Liverpool Street."

He struck a match on a lump of fog and peered into the ferro-concrete atmosphere.

"Looks to me like Hyde Park Corner," he said. "No wonder my feet ache."



As a guide for the weary wanderer he was a distinct failure, and I told him so, at a distance, and left him groping his way back to his beat.

Wherever it was, the place was full of lamp-posts and pillar-boxes ; and there was one fat man who was simply everywhere. I must have barged into him about eighteen times altogether. And talk about dark ! Why, once in the middle of a crowd I took out a handkerchief, and " Excuse me," said a voice, " but that's *my* nose you're blowing." . . . That'll show you.

As in a dream I heard all round me the churning of unseen wheels, the timorous honk of blind taxis, and the bellow of benighted buses feeling their way through the fog.

A shadow clutched me by the arm, and a still small voice said, " Goodness, Herbert, I nearly lost you that time, Now, dear, as we're near the shops, don't you think it's time you had some thicker pants ? Those you're wearing——"

" Pardon me, madam," I said, " but my name isn't Herbert, and my pants——" But she had fainted.

And again I wandered up and down, seeking that strayed artist, peering into every shadow that passed.

" Excuse me," I said to one that looked like him ; " but do you happen to be Low ? " And, do you know, that fellow wanted to fight me. Yes, he did. But I never fight with strangers.

" Well, I'll have one more shot at it," I said, and, crossing my fingers, I went up to a dim shape, a mere thickening of the fog, that stood stamping its feet in a doorway. As I approached it came towards me and :

" Can you tell me if this is Charing Cross ? " we said. Then, both together :

" Well, you're a nice one,"

" Well, you're a nice one,"

we said.

" I thought I told you——"

" I thought I told you——"

As you will have guessed by now, 'twas he, 'twas us, 'twas Low and I.

" We'd better leave the mutual recriminations for another time," I suggested, " and get on with that lunch. I've had nothing to eat but fog for the last three hours, and it's gritty."

So hand in hand we dived into the tenebrious night, and came presently to a rift in the soot, which Low said was a restaurant.

" Good afternoon," said the gent inside. " And what can I do for you ? Shirts, socks, braces, ties, collars——" We dived out again.

The next place we tried was a bank, and they hadn't anything to eat, either. So after that we shut our eyes and followed our noses. . . .

" This is better," I said, as the waiter came along. " Thick, please. It will be more in keeping with the climate."

It wasn't quite so dark in that restaurant, but it was dark enough. Quite. . . . From the other end of the room came the cry of a diner in distress.

"It's all right, sir," said the waiter. "Gent poured some soup into his ear by mistake."

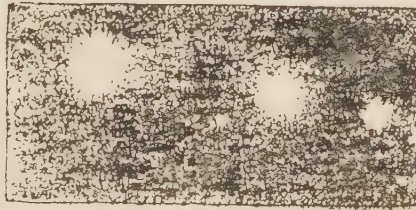
Not at all a bad lunch, but it would have been better if Low hadn't put



NELSON COLUMN



NO, NOT A WAR MONUMENT—
THOMAS DODGING A BUS.



SCENE ON THE EMBANKMENT.

WITH APOLOGIES TO OUR FOG PHOTOGRAPHERS.

sugar on his fish. And when I reached out for my prunes and rice the man at the next table was eating them.

"And how much was all that?" I asked when we were in the street once more.

"How much was which?" asked the artist. Then, as the dreadful truth dawned upon him, "Great Scot, I thought *you'd* paid!"

WE GO A-WAITING

WE found them under a lamp-post, pumping semibreves and crotchets into the listening night ; to wit, one large B-flat cornucopia, a trombone, even more B-flat, and one of those sewing-machine arrangements that you work with your feet.

Taking it by and large, the tout ensemble wasn't so bad. A trifle sketchy in the arpeggio bits, perhaps, and the rallentandos might have been a little more so-so ; but apart from that the general effect was quite good—from a distance. Say about four rods, poles or perches.

"What this show needs," said Low, "is just a dash of *allegro ma non troppo*. Otherwise, it's got Sir Henry Wood's little crush looking like the lunch-time hooter at the pickle works."

We explained all this to the chief wait, and offered him our services for the good of the cause and a share of the profits.

"Well, perhaps it does want a bit of livening up," he said. "I suppose you gents can sing?"

"Sing?" I said. "I should just about think we can. Surely you've heard of Sweet and Low, the famous duettists. Well, that's us. I'm sweet and he's low. A refined and elegant entertainment, harmonious and entirely devoid of vulgarity."

"My friend on the left," said Low, "has a four-valve voice which must be seen to be believed, and only last summer one of his low notes took first prize at the Gunnersbury Eisteddfod."

The chief wait considered a while, blowing pensively into his megaphone thing.

"What about it, George?" he asked the sewing-machine. "Shall we give 'em a trial?"

"May as well," said George. "There's safety in numbers."

And thus it was.

I do wish you could have been there. We made those sleeping suburban sit right up in bed and take notice. They didn't want to sleep any more. They couldn't.

Through the stilly night the sweet sounds stole, rising and falling, swelling and dying away in perfect harmony ; telling of Yuletide and peace on earth till you couldn't hear yourself snore. And even the babies woke up and joined in.

The cornucopia was splendid, puffing and grunting away down in the

basement like a flatulent pachyderm ; while as for Low—well, some of his top notes are so high that they have snow on them all the year round.

Maybe the harmonium was a little asthmatic, owing to the fact that the rain had got into it ; but the trombone made up for its shortcomings. The way that man kept pulling yards of brass out of his mouth was marvellous.

Good Christian men, a-woof-pom-pom,
With heart and soul and woof-pom-pom,
Give ye heed to what I woof.
Woof—Pom !

In the dark a window opened, and I stood by to catch the shower of small change.

"I say, you chaps," said a plaintive voice ;
"I know it's Christmas and all that, but for the love of Mike——"

We decided to go higher up the road.

"Now, then," said our leader. "A little more beef in it this time, please. Doh, mi, soh, doh. Prrrrrrm !"

We were off. The sweetly blended notes rang through the silent streets like the song of a seraph. The porcine noises of the big oom-pah and the bronchial wheezings of the harmonium mingled with our mellifluous voices and the dull thud of an occasional brick. Between us we made the local welkin ring and ring again.

The way those men worked was wonderful. In his efforts to get the wind up, the sewing-machine merchant must have pedalled miles, and the trombone was simply dripping with emotion.

"Not so dusty," said our leader. "Pity you finished first, though. By the way, what were you gentlemen singing ?"

"Why, the First Noel, of course," we said.

"Ah, that accounts for it," said the Oom-pah. "We was playing 'While Shepherds.' At least I was. I can't answer for my pals. But the great thing in this business, you know, is unity. It'd sound heaps better if we all played the same thing. More refined like. As it was you beat me and George by a short head."

"No harm done," said George. "I've just discovered that we're playing outside the workhouse."

Our next pitch was a quiet square, which I once looked upon as respectable ;



and we gave them of our best. A small dog, who was also suffering from the Christmas spirit, came along, and, squatting on his haunches by the trombone, joined in heartily. But though his heart was good, he had a rotten ear for music.

"A-oooooooo!" he said, like a large size in stomach-aches. "A-oooooooo!" Just like that. And always in the wrong place.



Was it not Orpheus who, with his lute, drew trees and stones towards him? We didn't collect any trees, but in the middle of our second verse a hairbrush hurtled through the air.

It wasn't much of a hairbrush, however, and the trombone, who was as bald as a basin, gave it to Low with the compliments of the season.

Thus encouraged, we plunged head first into another carol, whereupon a gentleman in a pink and green nightshirt stuck his head out of a window and told

us to go away. Right away! I believe he suggested Bath as a good place, or it might have been Billericay. . . .

At our next stop a dear old lady gave us a lump of second-hand cake and a lot of good advice about drink, all of which we took. Unfortunately we couldn't stop there long, on account of a peevish night policeman who said we were keeping him awake.

The next lamp-post was much more profitable. A gentleman in a very crush hat kindly conducted the performance with his umbrella, and at the end of our selection gave us threepence-ha'penny in coppers.

"Splendid thing, Mistletoe Bough," he said. "Always reminds me boy-hood's days all 'at sort thing. Bew'ful. Wanna cry. Goo'-night. Happy returns. Same t'you."

Not wishing to obtain money by false pretences, I pointed out that we had been singing "Good King Wenceslas," but, bless you, he didn't mind.

"All same!" he said. "Wanna cry! Wanna cry all same. Wanna cry worse'n ever. Gor' save Good King Wenc'las! Natural Anthem." And to show his loyalty he took off his hat and stood in it.

"And that's about all for to-night," said the trombone. "I can't stand any more of it. I've been blowing that hard to try and drown you two chaps——"

"That's funny," I said. "We've been singing our loudest to try and drown you. However, the draught from the sewing-machine has given me a stiff neck, so I think we'd better go home. But what about the takings? Share and share alike, I suppose?"

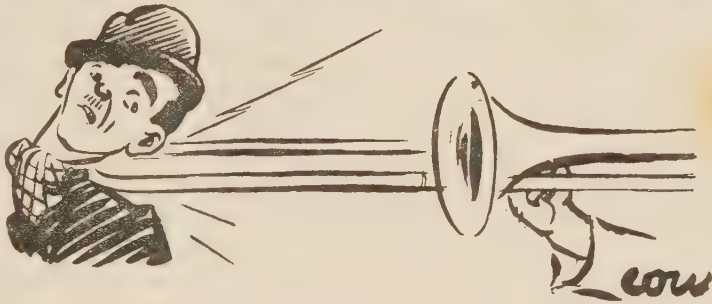
"Well," said the Oom-pah, "we're doing this for the poor, you know."

"And we're the poor," said the harmonium.

"But we're nothing like as poor as you," said the trombone.

"So if we take the threepence-ha'penny," said the Oom-pah, "you can take the cake."

And with three harsh laughs they faded into the night.



WE SEE THE OLD YEAR OUT

"THIS," I told Low, "is a sad and solemn occasion. The Old Year, with all its joys and sorrows, its quarter-days and other tribulations, is sick unto death; and before us there lies the New, rosy-red with dreams, unseen, unknown——"

But just then a fat gent in a paper hat walloped me over the head with a pink bladder, and I forgot the rest.

All the same it was a sad and solemn occasion. The Old Year, as I said before, lay a-dying, and the New—— But what's the good of talking when people keep blowing tin trumpets in your ear and throwing bread at you?

That the occasion might be observed with proper solemnity we had booked a table at Prestissimo's, not too near the jazz band; and there, with about five hundred other merry mourners, we ate the funeral baked meats and the funeral boiled pudding served in honour of the dear departed.

The fact that we were all a year older didn't seem to worry anybody much. Old and staid fathers of families shook off their years and put on paper caps instead; the youngsters forgot all about honouring their parents and bashed them about with their balloons; while the air was thick with paper balls and anything else that came handy, and shrill with the blasts of a hundred squeakers.

Behind us a group of churchwardens, or sidesmen, or family solicitors stood with linked hands, chanting a merry dirge for the defunct. I could not catch the exact words, but it was something about the mistletoe hung in the auld lang syne, with extracts from the Miner's Dream here and there to liven it up.

And when we couldn't think of anything else we danced. We two-stepped between the tables, fox-trotted in the foyer, valed in the vestibule, polkad in the passages, and Bostoned all round the balcony, totally oblivious of the band and each other. Rather jolly, don't you think, what?

But who was the blithering idiot who invented those coloured ribbons that they sling about nowadays?

Yards and yards and yards of it: red and blue and pink and yellow, all over the floor, and all round our feet, till we looked like caterpillars spinning our cocoons. After all, one can't Boston any sense with one's legs tied together, can one?

At the end of the dining-room stood a great grandfather clock, decked with holly, whose hands crept slowly towards the dawn of the New Year, and at five minutes to the hour the dancing stopped, and a gentleman at the far end mounted a table to tell us all about it.

Except for the popping of champagne corks, the squawk of a score of squeakers, the shouts of the merry-makers, and the biffing of the painted bladders, his remarks were roughly as follows :

"Ladies and gentlemen, pop ! We are gathered, fizz ! bang ! to greet,

THOMAS HELPS THE NEW YEAR IN.



pop ! wallop ! bing ! stick it, Jerry ! farewell to the Old crash ! bong ! pop ! I will not detain, pip-pip ! miaou ! fsssszt ! long speech, but I am sure I am voicing the pop ! voicing the wallop ! voicing the cock-a-doodle-doo ! of all those present when I wish you a Happy hooray ! bravo ! sit down ! pop ! bing ! fizz ! crash ! and we'll drink a richt guid wullie waught for the sake of bing ! pop ! wallop ! "

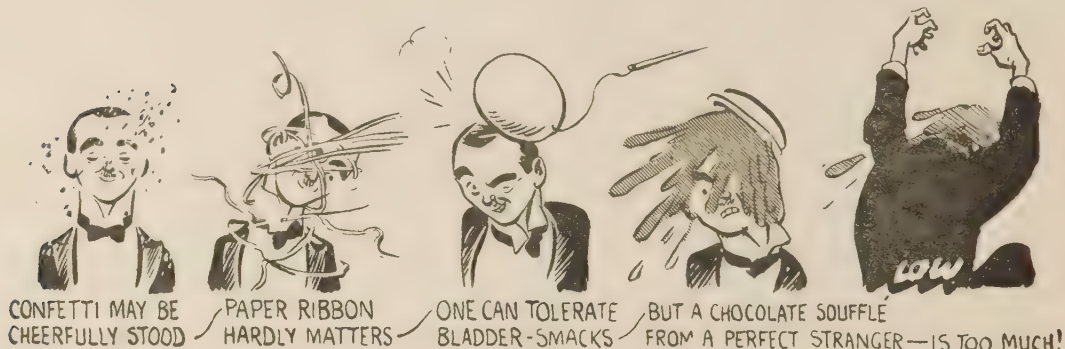
Anyway, you can see what he was getting at, can't you?

And now we were on the edge of the witching hour, when churchyards yawn and all that sort of nonsense. . . . One minute to twelve. . . . A hush descended on the waiting throng. . . . Thirty seconds. . . . Another hush descended. . . .

What was coming? With tense eyes we watched the great clock, watched its hands creeping together, marking slowly the last moments of the waning year.

Ten seconds. . . . Five. . . . Then the bell!

One . . . two . . . three . . . (You don't want me to keep on like this,



do you? Most of you know how the numbers go after three, I expect. Right!) Eleven . . . twelve.

Slowly the door of the clock opened, and Father Time—— Father Time got his scythe between his legs, fell base over apex, and staggered to his feet with his hour-glass under one ear and his whiskers under the other. And I won't be certain, but I thought I heard him say "Damn!" A bad start I fear.

However, when he had pulled himself together, it was truly an impressive sight. All but his whiskers, and they didn't fit.

With a tremendous cheer we saluted him, and, clasping hands, joined in that heart-rending song with the Scotch-and-soda accent.

Unfortunately a lot of us hadn't the book of words, while some others, with their watches in their hands, complained that the hotel clock was nineteen seconds fast. So, taking it all round, it went something like this:

"Should auld acquaintance be blowed for a tale. I tell you I put mine right by Big Ben this morning, should auld acquaintance and I've never known it gain a second.

"For Auld Lang Syne, my dears, mine was exactly a minute slow by the station clock this evening. We'll drink a cup of kindness yet, but I make it still fifteen seconds to twelve.

"So here's a hand, my trusty Ingersoll, and it's never lost a tick since I've had it, we'll tak' a richt guid wullie waught, and we won't go home till morning for he's a jolly good fe-e-e-llow, and *then* we won't go home. So hip-pip-pip-



THE SCOTS AT ST. PAUL'S

pooray, the donkey ran away, and he's a jolly good fellow, till daylight doth appear."

Or words to that effect.

As I remarked before, it was a solemn moment. Very solemn. I'm not

sure who it was that kissed me when I was looking the other way, but that was a solemn moment, too.

A few minutes later we stood, Low and I, with the stern face of Big Ben gazing down at us ; and there, beneath the silver stars, we promised to be better boys in future, and made our vows for the new-born year.

Unwinding the coloured ribbons from about our necks and shaking the confetti from our back hair, we clasped hands ; and " Never again ! " we swore. " Never, no, never again ! " And if I could lay hands on the joker who slung that chocolate éclair at me——

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